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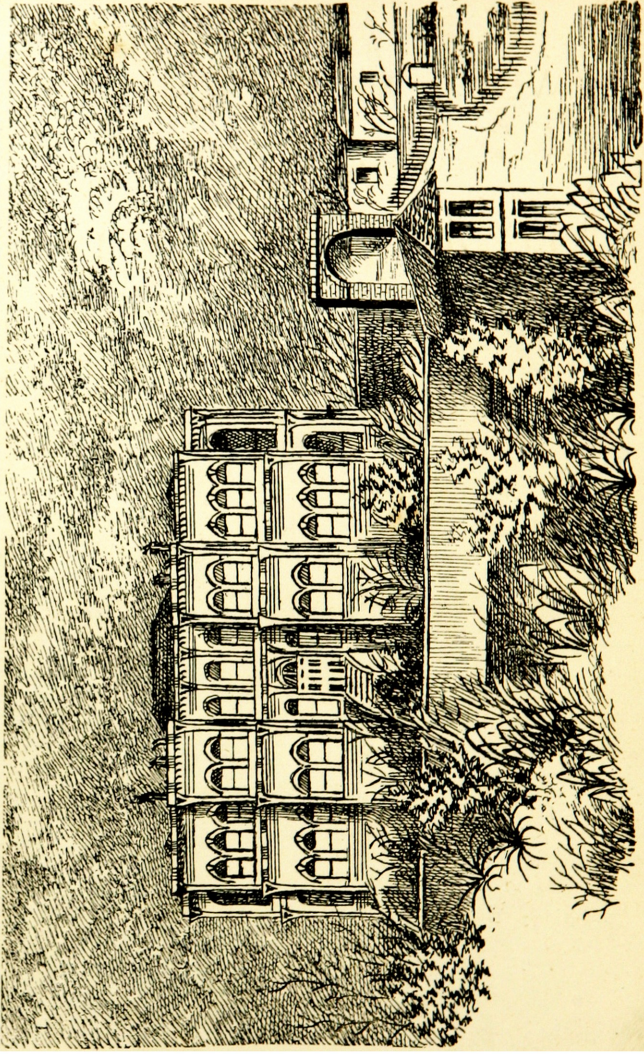
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Sultan Mehmed II, the Conqueror

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United States Ambassador
to Turkey

ABDUL HAMID II.



YILDIZ KIOSK, PALACE OF ABDUL HAMID II.

THE
TWELVE YEARS' REIGN
OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY
ABDUL HAMID II.
SULTAN OF TURKEY

BY THE
PRINCESS ANNIE DE LUSIGNAN

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ERRATUM.

Page 24, line 13 from top: *for* "took place on June 25,"
read "took place on January 25."

PREFACE.



THE most regrettable fact in the recent evolution of English life has been the gradual widening of the sphere of purely party polemics. This tendency has been more or less manifested since the introduction to politics of the distinctly democratic element in 1868; but it has been reserved to the party leaders of the present time to endanger great national interests by carrying the faction fight into the region of foreign policy. To the party politician of to-day, as to the *sapeur* of the old French song, nothing is sacred, and when it is a question of his driving an opponent from office and securing its power and emoluments for himself and his followers, the

most time-hallowed policy is broken off short with as light a heart as that in which the Yankee traveller blew out the sacred lamp which had been burning for a thousand years.

It is to this tendency rather than to any reasons based upon considerations of what Lord Beaconsfield used to call "high policy" that we must look for the explanation of our country's change of attitude towards the Imperial Ottoman Government. It chanced that a crisis arose in the affairs of Turkey while a Conservative administration was in power in England. The Government of the day, in accordance with well-established tradition, sought to maintain the continuity of English foreign policy and took up a position more or less favourable to the Sublime Porte. The Liberal leaders, holding strongly the view that "the great duty of an opposition is to oppose," at once threw all their weight into the scale of Turkey's bitterest foe and by means

of "popular agitation," succeeded in driving the administration (not a very resolute one) from its historic strongholds and compelled it to pose as the "candid friend," rather than as the firm ally of the Ottoman power. As always happens in these cases, the Tadpoles and Tapers of the platform and press became *plus royaliste que le roi*, in their efforts to serve their political masters, and on all things Turkish was promptly thrown the strong but illusive light of party spite and misrepresentation. In this lurid glare every word and action of Turkish statesmen is distorted and thrown out of focus ; with the result that at the present moment it is next to impossible to obtain reliable information about the affairs of an empire, vast in extent, mighty in influence, and with whose destinies are bound up some of the dearest interests of our own nation. A special correspondent who told the whole truth, would, if that truth did not happen to fit in with the momentary interests of the party to whom

his chief was devoted, either find his "copy" mutilated beyond recognition or passed over altogether, and himself without a livelihood. These things being so, and having regard to the enormous commercial and financial interests which my countrymen have at stake in the Ottoman empire, it has occurred to me that a little of the dry light of truth might not be unacceptable to those of them whose eyes are not yet quite blinded by the glittering of party weapons of warfare. I have therefore felt it my duty to give to the rising generation the knowledge I have acquired during a residence of many years in Turkey, and at the same time to express in act the sentiments of gratitude which fill my heart, for the kindness, consideration, and distinction I have received in that country, especially at the hands of the illustrious monarch who now sits upon the throne of Stamboul.

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# ABDUL HAMID II.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE ACCESSION—THE WAR.

THERE are but few pages of Turkish history not full of dramatic incident and “striking situations.” Whether on battle-field or in council-chamber, whether crossing swords with the flower of European chivalry under the walls of Vienna, or outwitting Western diplomacy on the shores of the Bosphorus, the men into whose hands the destinies of Islam have been committed have always managed to concentrate upon themselves the attention of all minds not proof to the attraction

of the heroic and the romanceful. Nor is it such minds only that have felt themselves strongly drawn to the side of the Crescent in its conflict with the Cross. Historic temperaments like that of Draper, and scientific intellects like Kingdom Clifford's, have perforce borne witness in favour of the followers of the Prophet. Over and over again, we are told in the "Conflict of Religion and Science," in the life and death struggle between the powers of Progress and Reaction the swords of the Sultans have been drawn on the side of the former; and in one of the most remarkable of his many remarkable essays the brilliant scientist just mentioned testifies how, in the midst of the deep darkness of the middle ages, the light and the right were flashed back into Europe from the blades of Mohammedan scimitars.

But all this, men say now-a-days, happened a long time ago. For the life of the present generation, at any rate, the "sick man" has been dying. The halo of

romance which once blazed round the Caliph's jewelled turban burns now with a pale and sickly glimmer. The hand which grasps the banner of Islam has grown feeble with age, and the true attitude of the West towards the once great power, at mention of whose name its statesmen were wont to grow pale, and its warriors to look to their weapons, is that of the raised foot preparatory to delivering the parting kick which is to send it "bag and baggage" across the straits of the Bosphorus.

Whether, in any case, it is quite safe to kick a *dying* lion I must leave to the consideration of those whose fingers are itching to seize that lion's inheritance; although I fancy that the last power which tried the experiment will be willing to admit that it was both costly and disastrous. But I hope that those of my own countrymen who will do me the honour of reading these pages will find themselves convinced that neither the "sick man" of the Czar

Nicholas, nor my own simile above, at all accurately portrays the condition of the Turkish power in Europe at the present day.

Under the reign of his Majesty Abdul Hamid II. the condition of the Ottoman Empire might be much better described as one of robust convalescence than of sickness or decline. It is no more than simply stating a perfectly verifiable fact to say, that no power in the world has made such rapid and vigorous strides in the path of recovery and reform as has the empire of the Sultan during the last ten years. And this is the more admirable and remarkable when we consider the tremendous difficulties and obstacles with which the men who have been entrusted with its conduct have been called upon to cope.

To adopt for the moment the "sick man" metaphor—the figure of speech employed with such nauseating iteration by English writers and speakers when dealing with

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*affaires Turques*—when called to the bedside of a patient in desperate straits, the efforts of the physicians (however mistaken and ill informed they may be) are, at any rate usually, honestly directed towards increasing that patient's strength, and assisting him to recovery. Even if the heroic remedies of depletion and amputation are resorted to, they are at least applied with a view to dissipating a dangerous inflammation, or to strengthening and vitalizing the limbs which are left. But, in the case of Turkey the impartial eye of the onlooker will have no difficulty in discerning that the diplomatic doctors have, in every case in which their services have been sought, devoted all their skill and energy to leaving their patient nearer death than they found him. Every prescription which has been written in the shape of protocol or treaty has been designed to dull consciousness, and to hasten the stage of coma precedent of final dissolution. To continue the simile—the



various conferences and congresses which have sat upon the affairs of the Porte resemble nothing so strongly as the consultations of a number of medical men called to the bedside of a dying millionaire, and thinking and acting not in the interests of the patient himself, but in those of his hungry heirs-at-law, and the residuary legatees of his property. A painless end rather than a rapid return to health has invariably been the aim of the eminent and decorated physicians and surgeons who have surrounded the sick couch at Constantinople.

It is the action of his Majesty Abdul Hamid in seeing through the schemes of these gentlemen, in driving them from his presence, and in taking the cure into his own capable hands, which has won for him at once the dislike and suspicion of European politicians and the devotion and trust of his own subjects, Christian and Turk.

Before dealing in detail with the

remedies which up to now have been so successfully applied, it will be necessary to glance at the character of the man in whose brain they have had birth ; at the events which led to his inheriting his high and onerous position ; and at the nature of the difficulties and dangers with which he has set himself to deal and to overcome.

The year 1876, in the August of which Abdul Hamid ascended the throne of his fathers, was not without its fair share of that romantic interest which, as I have said above, has always invested the story of the Crescent.

On the morning of June 4 of that year, in a palace on the Bosphorus (whose ships that day were gay with bunting in celebration of the Christian Whitsuntide), a scene was enacted which for dramatic pathos it would be difficult to equal in the annals of fallen monarchs.

Standing before a mirror, apparently occupied with his toilette, is a man whose weary, sad expression betokens disgust

with life. From time to time his looks turn from his own reflection in the glass to the window, through which he can see the gay rigging of the foreign ships, the small rowing-boats hurrying to and fro among the huge anchored steamers, and all the life and bustle on the opposite shore. Presently a slight noise from a door to his right diverts his attention. He turns his head, and sees the frightened eyes of a woman of the harem peering at him through the glazed panel of the door of communication. With an impatient gesture he walks towards it, turns the key in the lock, and the watcher disappears. Then he resumes his place at the mirror, and begins to trim his short thick beard with a pair of scissors, glancing from time to time over his shoulder to see that he is not again being overlooked. An hour later the eyes again appear at the door, but they see no figure before the mirror, and the anxious ear of the listener can catch no sound from the interior. She cranes

her neck to take in more of the room, and on a sofa against the wall she sees a sight that sends her back screaming with terror to her companions in the adjoining chamber.

The next moment, with hysterical cries, sobs and wringing of hands, the harem is scuffling along the passage, and battering at the door of the room. The door gives way to the pressure, and the horror-stricken women are in the presence of what, a few minutes before, was their master. Stretched upon a couch, with the pallor of death upon his face, with eyes closed as in a peaceful sleep, with one bare arm loosely hanging at his side, is the man who a short while ago held their lives and destinies in his hands. Grasped by the fingers of one of these hands are the scissors with which he had been trimming his beard. Some of the women fling themselves upon the body, and start back with fright and horror ; their hands are red, for the couch is soaked with blood. Yet the body bears

no marks of violence. Amid the weeping, wailing, distraught throng, one woman remains calm, self-controlled—one woman, the oldest of them all—the one who, if nature's laws rule her being, is yet feeling the keenest pain. It is the dead man's mother. With an imperious gesture, which no one there ventures to disregard, she drives them from the room. Then she discovers the cause of her son's death. On the other arm, the arm hidden by the reclining body, is a small incision, made by the point of the scissors, just where the great artery runs up to the surface, at the inside bend of the elbow. From this little outlet the weary life of the man has ebbed away.

Then the eunuchs of the palace are summoned, and a while later, in a low, smoky, disused guard-house, on a coarse mattress, guarded by a single Turkish soldier, lies all that is mortal of ex-Sultan Abdul Aziz, a man who a week ago was sole ruler of one of the greatest empires of the earth, supreme head of the Moham-

medan faith, in whose pocket was the key of the East, and at the clap of whose hands a hundred thousand warriors would have carried fiery death on to the frontiers of the western world.

That day every telegraph wire in the four continents, and the cables under every sea vibrated with the ghastly story. "Assassinated" was the word which rose to the lips of both diplomat and man in the street, and even the *Times* newspaper, which a few days before had congratulated its readers on the fact that a deposition of a Turkish sovereign could now take place without the slightest suspicion of foul play, without waiting for the faintest trace of evidence, adopted the popular view.

But *a priori* judgments are often more just than decisions come to upon incomplete or misleading evidence; and no one who has an intimate knowledge of the *affaires du Bosphore* at this troublous time, or who was present in Constantinople during the public trial of the

conspirators subsequently, will have any doubt that for once the intuition of Printing House Square was right, and that the romantic little story set out above requires a good deal of revision.

I do not know that I should have devoted so much space to this question of suicide or murder, were it not that the attention of the English people has been reverted to it by Sir Henry Eliot's attempt<sup>1</sup> to cast odium upon the present ruler of Turkey.

The ex-Ambassador's desire to white-wash the character of his friend Midhat Pasha has caused him to present the English people with such a strange perversion of the facts, and the "personal equation" plays such a large part in his narrative, that I think it well, at the risk of wearying my readers, to tell simply and straightforwardly the story as it is known to me. I shall also give a *précis* of the

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Nineteenth Century*, Jan. 1888. The Death of Abdul Aziz and Turkish Reform by Sir Henry Eliot.



evidence upon which, before a duly and properly constituted tribunal, the conspirators were adjudged guilty of murder, and leave all who read to form their own judgment of the merits of the two views.

Of course I know well enough that nothing I can say will in any way influence the opinion of those who subscribe to the new notions in politics, that those who by virtue of their position and opportunities must needs be in ignorance of the facts are more likely to form a correct judgment than the men "on the spot;" and that, for instance, a Birmingham town councillor is more capable of solving a problem of Indian administration than an official who has spent the best years of his life in the Indian service. But I venture to doubt (*pace* Mr. Gladstone) whether the digestion of the majority of my countrymen is yet quite equal to the assimilation of the fashionable paradox, and therefore I think it worth while to say that although I have passed a consider-



able portion of the last ten years of my life in the East, and am intimately acquainted with most of the men who are responsible for the administration of the Ottoman Empire, I have never met a single Turk who has the slightest doubt that Sultan Abdul Aziz met his death by foul play. Not long ago one of his wives, who is now married to a high official at Adrianople, remarked to a friend of mine, when the question arose in the course of conversation, "What is the use of making all this fuss? Of course we all knew well enough that he was murdered."

Exactly what happened in the room of Abdul Aziz in his last hours of life must always remain largely a matter of speculation, and in the face of so much conflicting evidence the decision must turn more upon the question of *motives* than upon events. And that this view, in spite of his mention of the certificate given by the medical men who examined the dead body of the Sultan, is that most favoured by Sir

Henry Eliot, is evidenced by his anxiety to prove the victim's madness and the absence of any motive for his assassination.

First as to the Sultan's state of mind, and the *a priori* possibilities of suicide. In support of the theory of insanity, Sir Henry has stooped to adduce the most trivial facts, and has not hesitated to draw from them the most hasty and often incorrect conclusions. For instance, he says, "At one time he (the Sultan) would not look at anything that was written in black ink, and every document had to be copied in red ink before it could be laid before him. Ministers appointed to foreign courts could not proceed to their posts, and were kept waiting indefinitely, because their credentials addressed to foreign sovereigns could not well be written in red ink, and he would not sign those that were written in black." Now is it credible that Sir Henry Eliot, so long the accredited representative of his country at Constantinople, can be ignorant of the fact that

letters of credit to Ottoman ambassadors and envoys are *never signed by the Sultan*, but are given by the Sublime Porte, and that red ink is the proper official material, red being the royal traditional Byzantine colour, and always used both by Eastern sovereigns and patriarchs? If a little undue conservative punctiliousness on the part of monarchs in matters of detail is to be taken as proof of insanity, how many of the crowned heads of Europe would be outside the walls of lunatic asylums?

As for Abdul Aziz's supposed "despair," there was not the slightest ground for any such feeling. Putting aside the element of fatalism, which makes a part of every Turk's character, and causes him in the face of disaster to cry "*Kismet*," and with philosophic serenity await events, the Sultan was ignorant neither of the history of his predecessors, nor of the actual state of affairs in Constantinople. He knew well enough that it was no rare event in the

history of the Ottoman Empire for its sovereigns to be deposed by a *coup-d'état*, and subsequently reinstated on the throne, or permitted to pass the rest of their lives in dignified retirement. With the histories of Mustapha I., Ibrahim I.,<sup>2</sup> Mohammed IV., Mustapha II., and Selim III. in his mind, historic precedent was all against the counsels of despair.

Nor was the political position at the moment so very desperate. Although by a sudden *coup* the party of "young Turkey" had made itself dominant, Abdul Aziz knew that "old Turkey" was by no means dead, and that it and its objects were strongly supported by Russian diplomacy. He also had good

<sup>2</sup> The end of this Sultan presents a strange parallel to that of Abdul Aziz himself. Ascending the throne in 1640, he was deposed eight years later. His son, Mohammed IV., a boy of ten years of age, was proclaimed in his stead. Shortly after this a reaction set in, but when the messengers came running to the Seraglio to announce to their old master the good news of his reinstatement, they found that he had been murdered by the partisans of his son.

reasons to believe that he himself was an object of much personal affection on the part of many of the troops, of whose well-being and comfort he had always shown himself solicitous. Add to these considerations that he was perfectly acquainted with the condition of Mourad's health, and knew therefore that *his* deposition could only be a matter of weeks, and it seems to me, as it did to every one in Constantinople at the time, that motives to suicide were absolutely non-existent. I might add also that the religion of Islam, like that of Christianity, forbids self-murder, and that the Sultan was a strict observer of all the precepts of his faith.

On the other hand, all the facts which would have tempted Abdul Aziz to bide his time, of themselves furnished powerful motives to his adversaries to put him beyond the reach of political reaction. They knew the untiring persistence of Russian diplomacy, and that intrigue would

never cease while the object of intrigue was above the ground ; they knew that the secret of the new Sultan's health could not long be kept; they feared an outbreak of disaffection among the troops, many of whom, as I have said, were personally attached to their old master. Above all, they knew that they were playing a desperate game, in which the stakes were their own lives and fortunes. Reaction for successful conspirators means more than political discomfiture ; it means exile and the gallows ; and history teaches us that those who accept the premises of a revolutionary syllogism seldom hesitate to act on the conclusion.

So much for the *à priori* evidence. And now, before I go on to the trial of the authors of the *coup-d'état*, let me say a word or two more of the article of Sir Henry Eliot which has made it necessary for me to put into the form of an argument what under other circumstances I should have related as a narrative.

When a writer comes before the public with a story of events of a decade ago, in which he brings grave and even terrible charges against living personages, who by virtue of their position are debarred from entering into controversy with him or bringing forward witnesses in his refutation, the question for the readers whom he addresses is largely one of his own personal credibility and accuracy. If it can be shown that he has suppressed facts which told against the particular theory he is propounding, it proves him to have written, to say the least of it, in the spirit of a partisan ; and if it can be further proved that he is inaccurate in his statement of details, the impartial judge will surely regard his main propositions with extreme doubt, if not with actual suspicion. To put it shortly (and mildly), he is a discredited witness. Both these things can be done in the case of Sir Henry Eliot, whose article is obviously the production of a pleader with a case to urge rather than that



of a historian with a story to tell. I have already shown above, in my reference to the great red ink question, how ready is Sir Henry to twist into evidence in support of his case a matter whose real bearing is all the other way ; but there is a much grosser instance of the kind of thing I mean in that passage of his article which refers to the murder in the council-chamber of Hussein Avni by the young officer, Tcherkess Hassan. Hussein Avni was the officer in command of the troops, who were guarding the deceased Sultan's palace at the time of his death,<sup>3</sup> and, as came out subsequently at the trial, he was the man who in all probability was the chief instrument of the conspirators in carrying out their designs against Abdul Aziz's life. Ten days after the latter's death, when Hussein was attending a council of ministers, Tcherkess Hassan, gaining

<sup>3</sup> On the night in question the old guard of the palace had been withdrawn and replaced by a new regiment, with whom Abdul Aziz had had no personal relations.



entrance to the council-room, shot him dead as he sat ; then killed his co-conspirator, Rashid Pasha, and wounded the Minister of Marine, besides killing and wounding many others who endeavoured to secure him. Now, Sir Henry Eliot tells this story with much detail, and I must confess with considerable artistic ability. He should try his hand at a novel, this ex-diplomatist. He makes it perfectly evident that he was thoroughly acquainted with all the facts at the time, and that they have remained fresh in his retentive memory. At the end of his dramatic description of the scene of the murder, he says, " It did not appear that political considerations, in addition to the grudge which he (Tcherkess Hassan) bore to the Minister of War, had in any way actuated him." Now mark, Sir Henry fails to tell us why, if the young officer's grudge was only a private one against Hussein Avni, he should have also killed in the most deliberate way the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and attempted the life of

the Minister of Marine. But—and I wish particularly to direct my reader's attention to this point—*he altogether omits to state that Tcherkess Hassan was the brother-in-law of Abdul Aziz*. Now it would be doing Sir Henry Eliot a real wrong to suppose that he, so correct in his knowledge of all the other details of this startling and tragic occurrence, could possibly have been ignorant of the relation of the young Circassian officer to the dead Sultan. Knowing it therefore, as he must have done, what could have been his object in suppressing it, if it was not that *it supplies the otherwise missing motive* for Tcherkess Hassan's attack on the minister, viz. that of revenge for his murdered relative?

Sir Henry Eliot's estimate of the value of evidence is such as would make a lawyer's hair stand on end. In support of the view that Tcherkess Hassan had no particular object in view in killing Hussein Avni, but that he was "like an Indian 'running amuck,' who had maddened

himself with 'bang' or Indian hemp," he actually tells us that he (Tcherkess Avni) first looked for the minister at his own house, and not finding him there, followed him to the council-chamber! Surely the whole weight of this piece of evidence is in a direction directly opposite to the "running amuck" theory. Sir Henry is quite naïf in his partisanship.

Another striking proof of the failure of his memory is in the matter of dates. He states that the proclamation of the constitution took place on June 25. This error passes understanding; for he himself was a member of the Conference of Constantinople, which sat in *December*, and whose first sitting was disturbed by the salute of one hundred and one guns, announcing the new constitution! If he has forgotten the guns, does he not remember the cheers with which he was greeted by Midhat Pasha's supporters in recognition of his supposed services in bringing about the failure of the conference?

Now a word or two as to the "mock trial," as Sir Henry Eliot calls it, at which the murderers of Abdul Aziz were brought to justice. Of course it may be patriotic to hold the view that all trials which take place beyond the precincts of the Old Bailey are mere travesties of justice, and that all judges not appointed by an English Prime Minister are the mere subservient creatures of corrupt tyrannies. But unless that fine British sentiment be held for truth, it is difficult to see the applicability of the term "mock" to the tribunal which met at Constantinople on the 27th of June, 1881. The prisoners were arraigned before the *ordinary* court for the trying of such offences as those of which they were accused. The sittings were held in public. The president was a Christian, and many representatives of the foreign ambassadors were present at the proceedings. The whole thing was done strictly in accordance with the provisions of the ordinary law, no Coercion Act having been previously

passed in order to render a committal more easily obtainable.

The act of accusation was a long one, and took two and a half hours in reading. The most important clause was the one which stated that after the deposition of Sultan Mourad and the accession of Abdul Hamid II., it was decided to retrench the expenses of the imperial palace, and to this end to revise the appointments. During this revision it was discovered that three persons employed in quite subordinate offices were receiving a monthly salary of one hundred pounds Turkish. Upon inquiry it came out that this salary had been paid them in return for their services in procuring the assassination of Abdul Aziz. In fact they confessed that an oath of secrecy had been obtained from them by Nouri Pasha, who was acting as the instrument of the Council of Ministers created by an iradë of the Sultan, and without whose order and consent nothing could be done. Besides the assassination

of Abdul Aziz, the Council of Ministers had determined on doing to death the whole of the imperial princes, who had been invited to a banquet at the Nespetie Kiosk. But the plot having got wind, the princes had declined the invitation.

The first witness called was Mustafa Pehlevan, who said that he had been summoned by Mahmoud Djelal, who promised him that one hundred pounds Turkish a month would be allowed him and two others, if they would kill Abdul Aziz by opening his veins with a penknife with which he, Djelal, would provide them. Subsequently Nouri Pasha confirmed the promise and instructions, and swore them to secrecy. Besides the hundred pounds a month, they each got thirty pounds as a present. They were introduced into the deceased Sultan's residence by the officers Nedjib Bey and Ali Bey, after a night passed in the guard-room. The crime was committed under the immediate direction of Fahri Bey, who held the

Sultan by the shoulders, Djelal and Agha holding his legs. Witness himself cut the arteries of the two arms, while Nedjib and Ali kept the door of the room. The corpse was then taken to the guard-room wrapped in linen, where it was laid upon a mat.

*Question.* Is it true that the Sultan showed signs of life while being carried to the guard-room?

*Answer.* I don't know, but I think he was quite dead (*bien mort*).

The next witness, Hadji Ahmet Agha, confirmed the statements of the last in every particular.

Djeganti Mustapha, who had already confessed to having helped to assassinate the Sultan, now retracted his confession. He admitted that he had stated that Nouri Pasha had sworn him and his companions to secrecy, and ordered them to kill the Sultan, but it was not true ; he had made a mistake. On the contrary, Nouri Pasha had commanded them to take the greatest care of the Sultan, and they had done so,



but unfortunately Abdul Aziz killed himself the next day.

*Question.* Did you take part in the assassination of the Sultan ?

*Answer.* No, I was below ; but I ran up when I heard the noise, and then learned of the misfortune.

*Question.* But you have confessed to the exact contrary ?

*Answer.* I made a mistake.

The entrance of Midhat Pasha caused a good deal of sensation. He spoke with great deliberation, constantly referring to notes. He said sarcastically that he was condemned before being tried, but he bore testimony to the spirit of justice which had actuated the Sultan in giving him a public trial. He denied any knowledge of the special Council of Ministers, mentioned above, without whom nothing was to be done. He denied that any order had been given to assassinate the Sultan, but he admitted that orders had been given to deprive him of weapons of every kind.



He feared that he would be suspected as soon as he heard of the suicide.

*Question.* Why did you not order an inquest ?

*Answer.* It was not my business any more than that of the other ministers. If I am to blame, so were they.

Martel Effendi, one of the doctors who examined the body of Abdul Aziz, swore that he and his colleagues examined only the arms, feet, and face of the deceased Sultan. There had been no inquest, and no post-mortem.

Ibrahim Edhem Bey, one of the officers of the palace who had taken messages from Mourad to Abdul Aziz, bore testimony to the bad treatment which the latter had received at the hands of Ali Bey. He said that not even a breakfast could be given to the ex-Sultan without the consent of the Council of Ministers. He also swore that the three men accused of the actual murder had had private audience of the Council of Ministers.

Major Ahmed Effendi and General Osman Pasha swore that on the night preceding the morning of the murder Ali Bey was in the residence of the late Sultan.

Perhaps the most significant things in the whole trial were the speeches of the counsel for the defence. Refia Effendi, the advocate of Moustafa Pehlevan, finally threw over the theory of suicide, and although not explicitly admitting that of murder, pleaded that if his clients were guilty in fact, they were innocent in law, inasmuch as they had merely obeyed orders, and were simply in the position of the sheriff who carries out an unjust sentence.

The advocate of the accused, who had already confessed, claimed that if his client had been guilty of murder, he had a right of acquittal on the grounds of having confessed ; but he urged at the same time that murder had not been done, and he based his defence principally on the discrepancies in the stories of those who had

pleaded guilty, pointing out that, whereas they had sworn that the deed had been done with a penknife, the doctor had said that the wounds must have been inflicted with a pair of scissors.

No one can read the defence without being struck by the fact that the speeches were those of able and adroit men struggling against strong evidence. One piece of evidence which was exceptionally strong was that of the scientific men who swore that it would be quite impossible for a man who had cut the artery of one of his arms to also cut the artery of the other, for the cut arm would be quite useless.

The most interesting incident of the trial was the dispute between the Court and Midhat Pasha, who defended himself with much skill and dignity ; but the relation of it would necessarily occupy a disproportionate amount of space in my narrative, and I must perforce omit it. In the end the whole of the accused were found guilty, but

of different degrees of culpability. When the decision of the Court was made known, the counsel for Mahmoud again urged that his client was not guilty in law, as it was clear that *he had been acting under the orders of a superior*.

I have said above that the trial was held before the ordinary tribunal. To an Englishman this fact may not have much significance, but it will be better appreciated when I point out that this was the first time in the history of Turkey that men accused of a serious political crime were tried by the ordinary law, and in the presence of the public, the representatives of the foreign powers and the foreign press.

It only remains for me to add that the trial was instituted at the earnest solicitation of Youssof Izzeddin Effendi, the son of Abdul Aziz, who threw himself at the feet of Abdul Hamid and begged for justice on the murderers of his father.

For some time before the Turkish

ministers had made up their minds that the highest interests of the Empire demanded a sudden and decisive change of policy, it had been obvious to every patriotic Turk that a certain malign influence was rapidly growing to great and dangerous proportions in the counsels of the Empire. To paraphrase a famous historic sentence, the power of Russia had increased, was increasing, and had to be diminished. For a considerable period the real ruler of Turkey had been Mahmoud Pasha. I say the "real" ruler, though "real" is hardly the correct term, for although this statesman had gained supreme influence over his master Abdul Aziz, he in his turn was little more than the creature of the Russian Ambassador. And thus the strings which moved the state puppets on the Bosphorus were pulled at St. Petersburg.

The first object of the combined attack of the patriotic party, then, was the Grand Vizier Mahmoud. The attack was ostensibly successful, Mahmoud was

dismissed from office, and the opponents of Russian intrigue began to see light ahead. But the miasma of Muscovite influence, so long in accumulating, was not to be dissipated by anything so straightforward and simple as the dismissal of a minister. Russian diplomacy is too cunning and courageous to treat a rebuff as a defeat. Bold enough when boldness is safe and possible, it knows how to work underground when sap and mine offer the best chance of success. The national party, in the midst of their self-congratulations upon the new hope which they had given to their country, discovered that although Mahmoud had been driven from office, he had by no means been deprived of power. His whispered counsels still found their way to the Sultan's ear, and they knew from bitter experience that what he advised to-day, Russia had prompted yesterday. So, they concluded, and subsequent events were soon to justify their conclusion that the one

hope for their country lay in the "ultima ratio" of statecraft, a *coup-d'état*.

But it was left for Mahommedan statesmen to show that a *coup-d'état* of the most forcible kind can be delivered without any of the passion and bloodshed and crime which have distinguished similar operations of "high policy" amongst people who are apt to boast of the immense superiority of their political institutions.

The ministers were reluctantly forced to the conclusion that their monarch, broken in health, both of mind <sup>4</sup> and body was no longer strong enough to resist the baleful influence which had so long possessed him. Something more than half-measures were

<sup>4</sup> Before finally deciding on taking action, the ministers submitted the following questions to the Sheik-ul-Islam:—

1. "If the chief of true believers gives signs of madness and of ignorance of political matters, if he spends the public money on himself in excess of what the state or the nation can grant him, will he not thus become the cause of troubles to the public?"

2. "Ought he to be deposed?"

To both of these an affirmative answer was given.



necessary if their country was not to drift and stumble into the position of a Russian province. The blow had to be struck, and they struck it without flinching.

On May 30th, 1876, five days before his death, Abdul Aziz left the palace where he had reigned for the palace where he died, and Sultan Mourad V. was proclaimed ruler of Turkey.

The change was made with less disturbance than was occasioned in London by the Trafalgar Square demonstrations two years ago, and this and a subsequent event proved *au mieux* that, whatever may be the arguments *pro* and *con* the political systems of Turkey and England, the ministers of the former can remove a powerful monarch with less bloodshed than the Government of the latter can suppress a political meeting.

The hope of the ministers that a new departure in the national policy, and a revivifying of the national existence would follow on the accession of Sultan Mourad



was shared by every patriot heart throughout the Empire. East, West, North and South, wherever the heralds went proclaiming the new Sultan they were received with transports of joy by the people. All who were in Constantinople on May 30th, 1876, will bear me witness that a great cloud seemed to have been lifted off the life of the city. Congratulations and asseverations of fealty poured in a continuous stream to the gates of the imperial palace, and amongst these, at once the most welcome and pathetic, was a letter from Abdul Aziz himself, assuring his nephew of his loyalty, and of his acceptance of his new régime.

The new hopes of the people and ministers were doomed to disappointment. Before Mourad had been many weeks upon the throne, it became evident that the condition of his health was not such as to enable him to bear the heavy strain which must be borne by the man who in those perilous and stormy times was at

the head of the Imperial Administration. Symptoms of mental and physical ill-health, which had lain dormant and unnoticed in the quiet and seclusion of the harem, sprang into prominence in the council-chamber.

Painfully the ministers recognized that they had beaten Russia only to be faced by a new danger, demanding in its turn to be met and overcome. They met and overcame it. With the same quietness and decision which had characterized the carrying out of one deposition, they set themselves to make preparations for another.

The Sheik-ul-Islam, the spiritual head of the Faith, was again consulted, the whole of the facts of the reigning Sultan's health and incapacity were laid before him, and his consent to yet another change of rulers was gained.

Then a deputation betook itself to Abdul Hamid, the younger brother of Mourad, with a request that in the interests of the

empire he would assume the throne of Turkey, and be girt with the sword of Othman, the sword that was soon to be drawn in a struggle for national life. Here, however, a new difficulty awaited the ministers. With that self-abnegating diffidence so often found in strong, true, and determined natures, and which has distinguished him throughout the whole of his official life, he declined to undertake the onerous duties of sovereignty until further and conclusive evidence of his brother's incapacity to rule was laid before him. For thirty-four years he had lived in seclusion, which he had no desire to exchange for the excitement and splendour of an Imperial throne. Posterity has hitherto dealt out a generous measure of admiration to the men who have refused a proffered crown ; let us hope that when the time comes for estimating the life-work of Abdul Hamid, this, the first incident of his public career, will not be forgotten. However, the men who had overcome the intrigues of a great

and hostile power were not to be daunted by the scruples of a too modest and diffident prince. The appeal in the name of his faith and country finally prevailed, and on the last day of August, 1876, Abdul Hamid II. ascended the throne of his fathers, and began that career of usefulness and reform, a brief and necessarily inadequate sketch of which it is the object of these pages to put before my fellow-countrymen.

Never has a European statesman been called upon to face a blacker outlook than that which met the eye of the new Sultan, and never has a blacker outlook been met with a steadier and more fearless gaze.

The finances, the backbone of every political system, were in a state which can best be described in one word—Chaos. A recent act of bankruptcy, inevitable though it was, had lost for Turkey much of the sympathy of the European countries which she had hitherto possessed. And we may remark, *en passant*, how largely western

sympathy appears to depend upon the prompt payment of dividends. Many of the provinces were seething with discontent and suppressed rebellion. The *agens provocateurs* of Russia were busy in every town and country village in the empire, and Russian gold in small quantities was paving the way for Russian steel and lead in large. On July 1st the Czar had moved his first pawn; Servia had declared war upon Turkey, and followed up the declaration by the invasion of Turkish territory. Like most of the military escapades of Servia, however, the movement was a failure; and the rebel forces were quickly defeated, and driven back, helter-skelter, across the frontier. Then, on the interference of the great powers—an interference which may be reconciled with the demands of diplomacy, but certainly not with those of justice—an armistice was concluded, to last until September 25th.

Thus Abdul Hamid took the reins at a

period of practical war. It was no time for political reforms. The first and immediate duty was the strengthening and organizing of the military forces of the empire. *Inter arma silent leges* is an aphorism of undisputed authority with practical politicians, and if in a state of war the laws are suspended, how much more must be held in abeyance the carrying out of schemes for political and social reform. Yet in spite of the warlike calls made upon him every moment, subsequent events have proved that the Sultan was even then meditating and planning those reforms of administration and government in which he has steadily persisted throughout the whole of his twelve years' reign.

The armistice with Servia was of a piece with all the other transactions and negotiations between Turkey and her enemies. Europe had interfered, not on behalf of peace, but in the interests of Servia, and Servia took full advantage of the opportunity secured to her. During

the whole period of the truce, Russian munitions of war, Russian officers and men, Russian horses and Russian guns, had poured over the frontier, to strengthen the rebel position at Alexinatz, and all the world expected that when the armistice concluded, the tables would be turned in real earnest, and that the "Lion of Servia" would distinguish himself in some other and bolder fashion than that of roaring loudly and running away. The event showed, however, that the "Lion of Servia," the noble animal which looks so well on banners and government stamps, was only a very poor sort of cat after all, and a cat whose paw was not even strong enough to drag out of the fire the chestnuts coveted by the "divine figure from the North." Within a month from the reopening of the campaign, in spite of the immense accession of strength it had received from the Russian "volunteers," the army of "heroic little Servia" was in full retreat, or, to speak quite correctly, in



full rout,—and the road to Belgrade lay open to the victorious advance of the Turkish general. He never got there. The scattering of the Russo-Servian forces was merely the tearing to pieces of the veil which hid the real figure of the drama. No sooner did the news of the Turkish victories reach St. Petersburg than instructions were sent to the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople to wait upon the Sultan with peremptory demands for a renewal of the armistice. The alternative being the immediate rupture of diplomatic relations.

One of the most marked characteristics of really great statesmen is their power of frankly recognizing accomplished facts. The enthusiast who, for the sake of a cause he loves, runs his head against a brick wall, may excite our admiration, but will scarcely invite our confidence. Of such are not the leaders of men.

Almost the first great question which Abdul Hamid was called upon to answer



was how he should meet this unfair and unprecedented demand on the part of a bitter and powerful foe ; and in this as in every other act of his life, he consulted the interests of his country and the wishes of Europe, rather than his own inclinations and false and conventional notions of personal dignity. He at once agreed to a suspension of hostilities for a period of five months. Having secured time to mature and complete his warlike preparations, the Russian Emperor made his second move. A diplomatic note was despatched to St. James's, expressing his Imperial Majesty's conviction that the interests of European peace (the solicitude of Russia for peace is really quite touching to the political student), demanded the immediate assembling of a European conference for the discussion of the reforms which were urgently called for "for the peace and safety of the Christian population of the Ottoman Empire," and for the obtaining from the Sultan a guarantee for

the carrying out of such reforms as the conference might decide upon.

If anything were wanting to place the bad faith of Russia beyond dispute, the facts attending the presentation of this note would supply the deficiency. In making his demand, a demand which conceivably might have been justified six months before, the Czar entirely ignored the facts of the *coup d'état* on the Bosphorus and the consequent establishment of a new régime. The greatest hater of things and manners Russian has never ventured to hint that that nation has not been well served by its official sources of information, and it is entirely impossible to doubt that the Czar had full knowledge of the character and aims of the sovereign whom events had placed upon the throne of Turkey. That is, he knew that he was demanding, with menaces, reforms which the Sultan had of his own initiative already determined to carry out. That the Russian policy was one of deliberate exasperation,

received further proof in the steps taken by the Czar for providing against "eventualities." An army of 150,000 men and 600 guns was mobilized, and the Grand Duke Nicholas was given the command. The Sultan would have been little short of a traitor to his faith and nation had he shut his eyes to the significance of these operations; but shutting his eyes is not a habit of Abdul Hamid's. He at once gave orders for putting the Ottoman forces into a condition of greater strength and efficiency than was necessary for meeting the attack of such a power as Servia, and when the conference assembled in the end of 1876, not a politician in Europe believed in the possibility of its achieving a single valuable result. They had not long to wait for the realization of their predictions. The conference broke up after having done all that its creator intended it should do—nothing.

After declining the advice of his candid friends, and refusing to be bullied into

acquiescence by his open enemies, Abdul Hamid devoted himself to the consideration of the possibilities of arranging terms of peace with Servia, without the assistance of the other powers. Here he scored his first success as a diplomat. The terms he offered were at once accepted, and, a breathing space being thus obtained, he again addressed himself to the subject of internal reforms.

But a reforming Sultan was the last spectacle to be tolerated by a reforming Czar. Peace and contentment within the Ottoman dominions would deprive the Muscovite of all excuse, and what was worse, of all opportunity for aggression from without. If Russia had failed to prevent the initiation of a new order of things in Turkey, she could at least ignore it. Immediately after the breaking up of the Conference, Prince Gortchacow addressed a circular to the great Powers, in which, taking as his text the failure of the late Conference, he said,—

“ Thus, after more than a year of diplomatic efforts, attesting the importance attached by the great Powers to the pacification of the East, the right which they had, in view of the common welfare, to assume that pacification, and their firm determination to bring it about, the cabinets again found themselves in the same position as at the commencement of the crisis, which had been moreover aggravated by bloodshed, heated passions, accumulated ruin, and the prospect of an indefinite prolongation of the deplorable state of things which hung over Europe, and fully preoccupied the attention of both peoples and governments. Still, in spite of all this, the Porte made light of its former engagements, of its duty as a member of the European system, and of the unanimous wishes of the great Powers. Far from having advanced one step towards a satisfactory solution, the Eastern question had become aggravated, and was at that moment a standing menace to the peace

of Europe, the sentiments of humanity, and the conscience of Christian nations."

To fully appreciate the subtle humour of this document, it is necessary to remember that, even before the Conference met, the Sultan had seriously taken in hand the question of internal administration, and in collaboration with his ministers had drawn up a scheme of governmental reform, which was announced to the representatives of the several Powers at their very first meeting. To the accompaniment of a thunder of guns, Safvet Pasha announced that—

"The great Act which is at this moment being accomplished, has just changed a form of government which has lasted 600 years. The constitution with which his Majesty the Sultan has endowed his empire is promulgated. It inaugurates a new era for the happiness and prosperity of his people."

The scheme of this constitution is given in another part of this book. Whether it

would have worked even under the most favourable conditions, it is not my intention to stop here to speculate. It is possible that the Turkish statesmen would have discovered that constitutional systems are organisms which must be evolved by time and the action of political and economic forces, and not pieces of machinery which can be set to work by the fiat of a special creation. It is just possible also, though in the presence of the "new democracy" it is advisable to whisper it with bated breath, that diverse races and creeds need diverse forms of government. But, however this may be, the one thing is quite clear and beyond all doubt—that the constitution of Midhat Pasha was never allowed even the slightest chance of success, and that the principal obstacles in its path were placed by the Power whose whole history has been a life-and-death struggle with the forces which make for freedom. It is not difficult to understand a Russian Emperor's objection to any-



thing in the shape of a constitution, when one remembers with what a light heart those potentates have strangled or doomed to life-long slavery all the men and women under their rule who have endeavoured to gain that form of government for their country.

Entirely ignoring this honest effort of the Sultan to grapple with the difficulties which beset him, Russia called upon the other Powers to demand from or to impose upon the Porte a statement of reforms to be undertaken within a definite period, and at the same time to give it to understand that the amelioration of the condition of its Christian subjects would be continually watched by the Powers, who would reserve to themselves the right of taking such common action as they might deem necessary to secure their well-being, and the interests of general peace.

In reply to this note the English Foreign Minister very properly demanded of Russia some formal assurance that such inter-



ference on the part of the great Powers should be followed by the demobilization of the Russian army then in position on the Turkish frontier. Following its invariable policy of never directly acceding to a definite demand, Russia met this suggestion by a counter-proposal that, upon the presentation of the United Note to the Porte, the question of disarmament should be left to the Emperor and the Sultan to decide, without reference to the other Powers.

This proposal having been acceded to, on the 3rd March, 1877, the following note, called in the language of diplomacy a *Protocol*, was presented to the Sultan by the Ambassadors of the great Powers :—

“ The Powers who have undertaken in common the pacification of the East, and have with that view taken part in the Conference of Constantinople, recognize that the surest means of attaining the object which they have proposed to themselves is, before all, to maintain the agree-

ment so happily established between them, and justly to affirm afresh the common interest which they take in the improvement of the condition of the Christian populations of Turkey and in the reforms to be introduced in Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria, which the Porte has accepted on condition of itself carrying them into execution. They take cognizance of the conclusion of peace with Servia. As regards Montenegro, the Powers consider the rectification of the frontiers and the free navigation of the Black Sea to be desirable in the interests of a solid and durable arrangement. The Powers consider the arrangements concluded, or to be concluded, between the Porte and the two principalities as a step accomplished towards the pacification which is the object of their common wishes. They invite the Porte to consolidate it by replacing its armies on a peace footing, excepting the number of troops indispensable for the maintenance of order, and by putting in hand with the least

possible delay the reforms necessary for the tranquillity and well-being of the provinces, the condition of which was discussed at the Conference. They recognize that the Porte has declared itself ready to realize an important portion of them. They take cognizance specially of the circular of the Porte of February 13th, 1876, and of the declaration made by the Ottoman Government during the Conference, and since through its representatives. In view of these good intentions on the part of the Porte and of its evident interest to carry them immediately into effect, the Powers believe that they have grounds for hoping that the Porte will profit by the present lull, to apply energetically such measures as will cause that effective improvement in the condition of the Christian populations which is unanimously called for as indispensable to the tranquillity of Europe, and that, having once entered on this path, it will understand that it concerns its honour as well as its interests to persevere in it

loyally and efficaciously. The Powers propose to watch carefully by means of their representatives at Constantinople, and their local agents, the manner in which the promises of the Ottoman Government are carried out. If their hopes should once more be disappointed, and if the condition of the Christian subjects of the Sultan should not be improved in a manner to prevent the return of the complications which periodically disturb the peace of the East, they think it right to declare that such a state of affairs would be incompatible with their interests and those of Europe in general. In such case, they reserve to themselves to consider in common as to the means which they may deem best fitted to secure the well-being of the Christian populations and the interests of the general peace."

I have thought it desirable to give this precious document—the production of the combined diplomatic ability of Europe—in *extenso*, because I know how few people

took the trouble to make themselves acquainted with it at the time, and how many were and are under the impression that Russia declared war only after every resource of diplomacy had been exhausted in favour of peace. As a means of securing European tranquillity, I fancy the above Protocol will strike most people as being worthy a pigeon-hole in a museum of curiosities of international literature. Addressed to the smallest of South American Republics, it would have been an outrage—addressed to the master of hundreds of thousands of armed men, the chief of a great historic empire, the man to whom millions of Mohammedans in three continents looked up as the head of their faith, it was a *bêtise* unexampled and unparalleled in the history of international negotiations. Even had its insinuations and assertions been justified by the facts, the signatories had chosen the most irritating possible language in which to make them. But when we remember that they were

made entirely without reference to any confirmatory evidence, and were accompanied by an open and palpable threat, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Powers were in some way hoodwinked into presenting an ultimatum, whose real was the direct opposite of its ostensible object, and that the brain which dictated the Protocol desired, not the peaceful ends apparently sought, but the bloody termination to which, as a matter of fact, their "Note" was only the prelude and introduction.

Consider for a moment the position of the man at whom the insult was levelled, and try to look at the matter through his eyes. In ascending the throne of Turkey he was conscious of having assumed almost unlimited responsibilities and duties towards a nation of the most loyal and devoted subjects in the world. For the due and proper performance of these duties, he knew that the first necessities were a free hand and a long period of

internal tranquillity. His statesmanlike instincts told him that the causes of the trouble which beset his empire lay too far back in time, and were too deeply seated, for any good effects to be produced by anything but experimental and slowly matured remedial measures. He knew that the remedies proposed from without were founded upon an entire misconception of the true nature of the disease and the possibilities of cure. He knew that one at least of the Powers who were so arrogantly urging their proposals upon him was actuated by pure selfishness, and had much more need than he for setting its own house in order. To put it quite frankly, he was not ignorant of the internal affairs of Russia, and he knew that the condition of the Russian peasants was far worse than that of any of his own Christian subjects, and that the cruelties deliberately practised upon them by the direct orders of the Czar were much greater, though less striking and dramatic, than any



of the spasmodic outrages of the Bashi-Bazouks.

Conscious of the entire rectitude of his own motives and purposes, he knew that he was the object of suspicion and distrust to the Powers, whose "agents" were to "watch" his efforts towards reform. On his frontier he saw gathering the armed forces of the hereditary foe of his creed and race, while he was called upon to break up and disband his own little army, which had just successfully repelled an invasion at once unjustifiable and unprovoked. At this supreme crisis of his own and his country's history, he hears himself addressed in the hectoring manner of a pedagogue to a naughty child. Surely, under these circumstances, we must all admit that he would have been less than a man and more than a slave, had he tamely submitted to the threat, even though it was uttered by united Europe.

Few sovereigns in the world, I fancy, would have displayed one-half his self-



control and patience. Had he instantly ordered the foreign Ambassadors to leave Constantinople, and defied Europe to do its worst, few would have wondered, and still fewer would have blamed. The Sultan of Turkey always holds in his hands certain cards which, if it pleases him to play, will bring fire and sword upon three-quarters of the world. In a word he is a spiritual, as well as a temporal, power, and it rests with him to set Christian and Mussulman at death grips wherever they live side by side. If ever a Sultan would have been justified in using this mighty power, that Sultan was Abdul Hamid at the presentation of the Protocol. Happily for Europe, Asia, and Africa—more happily for England—the Christian Powers were dealing with a man who felt that he had something else to consult than his own outraged dignity. He acted then, as he has acted ever since, as one whose guiding motive was the well-being of every one under his rule. He refused to be irritated

into defiance, and he made one more appeal to that sense of justice which, alas ! he was fated to find is non-existent in European courts when dealing with Mohammedan monarchs.

Within a week from the presentation of the Protocol, the Powers received his answer. In perfectly self-restrained and dignified terms it asserted the independence and right to resist interference of the Ottoman Empire, while affirming his own determination to do what no other Power could ever do, viz. bring about, unaided by Europe, the great reforms of administration which it freely admitted were necessary and desirable. The concluding words of the reply are worth quoting, as offering a pleasing contrast to those of the Note to which they were an answer :—

“ Strong in the justice of her cause and with confidence in God, Turkey declares that she ignores what may have been decided without her and against her. Determined to keep the place which Provi-

dence has destined for her, she will not cease to oppose the attacks which are directed against her, the general principles of international right, and the authority of a great European compact which binds the honour of the signatory Powers of the Protocol of the 31st March, which last document has no validity in her eyes. She appeals to the conscience of the cabinets, which she is justified in considering as animated towards her with the same sentiments of equity and friendship as in the past."

The "sentiments of equity and friendship" which were hidden in the bosom of Alexander II. found immediate expression, in a proclamation dated April 24th, 1877, in which he spoke of "the intense anxiety of the whole Russian nation to effect an amelioration in the position of the Christians in the East." How the Czar could possibly know what were the feelings of his people on any subject whatever, seeing that the expression of popular opinion in Russia is gagged in press and on platform,

it is a little difficult to discover ; but, however that may be, he went on to say that he felt himself forced by the " haughty obstinacy " of Turkey to draw the sword, and he ended, *more suo*, " in now invoking the blessing of God upon our valiant armies, we give the order to cross the Turkish frontier."

It is difficult for an Englishman to think of this period of European history without a blush of shame and anger. Even after the lapse of more than a decade it is hard to restrain one's pen within conventional limits, when writing of the timidity and vacillation, the selfishness and hypocrisy, the shameless abandonment of all that was traditional and best in our country's history, which characterized the attitude of the English Government in this supreme crisis. Writing after many years' study of my subject, and with a full knowledge of all the facts, looking at the matter by the light of the events of 1877-8, I have no hesitation in saying that the slightest firmness and

decision on the part of Lord Beaconsfield's cabinet in April, 1877, would have saved all the death and bloodshed, all the misery, and all the tears which left such a dark stain on the annals of that unhappy year. Lord Beaconsfield knew as well as the Sultan himself, that the one thing needful for the reform of the internal affairs of Turkey, was a long period of peace. He knew that England was bound by the most solemn engagements to secure to her ally at least the opportunity of reorganization and recovery. He was supported by an immense majority in Parliament, and by all that was patriotic and honourable in the English nation outside, and he could have defied the worst efforts of his political rivals and opponents. Yet, in spite of all this, he refused to boldly speak the word, whose utterance would have secured peace to Europe and amelioration and contentment to the subjects of the Sultan. It is ill crying over spilt milk, and it is a thankless, not to say a ghoulish task, to criticize the

deeds of a—in many respects—great minister, over whom the grave has long since closed ; but justice to the living compels us to not altogether spare the truth when speaking of the dead. “Honesty is the best policy” is a heading not often found (or, if found, seldom acted upon) in diplomatic copy-books ; but it is as true in the affairs of nations as in those of individuals, that sins have a way of coming home to roost, and at the present moment it needs no supernatural inspiration to foretell that England has not yet spent her last sovereign or her last life in repairing the criminal blunder of April, 1877.

For the first few days after the declaration of war, the Roumanian Government made a show of neutrality ; but this was a pretence which it was impossible to maintain for a space of more than hours, and almost immediately a convention was entered into with the Russian Government, placing all the resources of the principality

at the disposal of the Emperor. The Roumanian army, 50,000 strong, took up its position on the western frontier, and the Russians crossed the Danube. It is impossible to blame the Roumanian ministry for casting in their lot with Russia. They very naturally felt that their country was an earthenware pitcher between two iron pots, and they thought it better to avoid the collision by getting under the protection of the stronger.

The general commanding the Turkish force, whose duty it was to check the early advance of the Russians, was Abdul Kerim Pasha, and whether on account of inherent incapacity, or because of some darker reason, he appears to have lamentably failed in his duty to his sovereign and country. He destroyed no bridges, he cut no railways, he occupied no positions which might have embarrassed his enemies, and the consequence was, that on June 28th, General Zimmerman crossed the Danube, and within a month the invaders were in



full occupation of the Dobrudscha. Osman Pasha, who had been misinformed by his scouts of the true point of the Russian advance, fell back on Plevna, and the whole of the country north of the Balkans was in the hands of the Russians. The latter did not let the grass grow under their feet. General Gourko, with two brigades of cavalry and some field-artillery, led the advance of the army, commanded by the Grand Duke Nicholas. He entered Tirnova after a skirmish, advanced to the Hankoi Pass, where the inertness—to use no stronger word—of the Turkish intelligence department allowed him to surprise the small force of defenders, and then pressed on to Kezanlik, within six miles of the Shipka Pass. Here the Russians met with some real resistance. The Turks fought bravely, and even succeeded in repulsing for a time that part of the attack made by General Prince Mirski; but strategy prevailed over valour, and on the 18th of the month the two Russian



generals united their forces south of the Balkans.

This strategic victory afforded to Abdul Hamid the opportunity of making his first appearance as a man of war. The news of the rapid advance of the Russians reached Constantinople, and found that city in a state of something very much like panic. The Turkish ministers, seeing no natural barrier remaining between them and the invading army, fell into that state of mind which was said to be produced in the French villages at the sight of a single Uhlan. They rushed helter-skelter to the royal presence and besought his Majesty to abandon his capital, and to seek safety on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. But they, like Europe, had mistaken their man. With the same contemptuous dignity with which he had rejected the proposals of the Protocol, Abdul Hamid refused to listen to the counsels of despair. Seeing that at this supreme moment he had nothing to expect from his old allies, and less still from

the wisdom of his ministers, he determined to rely on his own brave heart, and the ancient spirit of his troops. He declined altogether to desert his post in the hour of danger, and himself took sole direction of the conduct of affairs. The result of this change in the situation was soon felt in many a bereaved Russian home. The invading generals soon discovered that in the heart of one brave strong man they had to deal with an obstacle compared to which the natural defences of a broad river and a mountain-range were but as lath barriers in the path of a torrent. Redif Pasha, the minister of war, was at once deprived of his portfolio; and Abdul Kerim, the general who had betrayed his trust, was recalled. Mustapha Pasha received the office of the former, and Muhamed Ali was sent to lead the army. The spirit of Abdul Hamid was not long in pervading the ranks of the defenders, and its workings were at the moment helped by an unlooked-for blunder on the part of

the Russians. The Grand Duke Nicholas, who held office less on account of fitness than of rank, had by some inexplicable oversight neglected to occupy the strong position of Plevna—an oversight of which Osman Pasha (soon to be the ruling toast wherever brave soldiers met together) had not been slow to avail himself. To retrieve the error of his princely master, General Krudener despatched three regiments with orders to seize the position at all costs, and his soldiers obeyed him. But the success was only a temporary one. The regiments were unsupported, and they were hardly inside the fortifications ere they were driven out again with frightful losses by Osman, who at once began to throw up those earthworks whose splendid defence will for ever shed as bright a lustre on his name as did the fighting at Sebastopol on that of Todleben. Osman showed himself to be something more than a man of prompt action and a skilful military engineer, for by means of the Oskanieh

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Pass, he secured his communications with Sofia, and at the same time strengthened the defensive position at Lovatz. Thus the Emperor's tenderness for his titled relations cost him three first-rate strategic points, millions of roubles wrung from the poverty of starving peasants, and the lives of tens of thousands of his soldiers. This sudden check to their hitherto unbroken career of victory, seems to have turned the heads of the Russian generals, and caused them to adopt the tactics of the infuriated bull rather than those of the skilful strategist. They advanced against Plevna with 30,000 men and heavy artillery, and on the 30th of July the attack was delivered. But they were destined to learn the lesson that mistakes are more easily made than retrieved. The anxiety of each of them to be the first to make up for his master's blunder caused them collectively to make the consequences of that blunder more disastrous still. The attacking divisions, instead of being under

one command, advanced independently of each other. They had to march through valleys of which the flanking heights were occupied by Turkish artillery. Thus proceeding without the necessary links of connection, one division got in advance of the other, and without waiting for support or reinforcement attacked alone. Unfortunately for Schakoffskoi, the leader of this division, his success was greater than his deserts, and by a brilliant rush he actually succeeded, though at considerable loss, in carrying the first position of the defence. I say unfortunately, for the triumph cost him and his master dearly. Flushed with victory, he refused to remain under cover until the less energetic commander could come up with reinforcements. Without giving his men breathing-time, he advanced against the second position. The Russians fought with the most splendid valour; but they were met by valour as great as their own, and by troops who were fresher for the fight than they; and

the result, after three hours' terrific struggle, was a complete repulse ending in a rout. The retreating Russians, in order to escape from the valley along which they had advanced, had again to come within full range of the Turkish batteries, which continued to fire on the fugitives until the cloak of night mercifully fell between pursuers and pursued and put an end to the slaughter. When the morning sun rose, all that was left of the gallant army which had advanced so recklessly to the attack of Plevna, was a shattered and demoralized remnant struggling in small groups back to the line of the Danube.

This first and crushing defeat of the Czar's army struck dismay into the hearts of the enemies, and shed a gleam of hope into the bosoms of the friends of Turkey all over the world. How it was appreciated by European men of business may be judged by the fact that the news was at once followed by a fall in the price of Rus-

sian bonds. All those who had refused to accept the doctrine of the rightness of might lost heart of grace, and looked forward to the immediate retreat of the whole Russian army across the Danube. But alas! for Turkey, the mischief done by her first commander, Abdul Kerim, did not end with his dismissal. By surrendering so many strong strategic points, practically without striking a blow, he had made it impossible for Osman Pasha to follow up the victory which had been gained by the blunders of his enemies, his own skill, and the stubborn courage of the men under his command. He was strong enough to hold his position, but not to continue the pursuit and strike a decisive blow at the main body, and thus the Russian generals were given time to rally their shattered forces, and bring up reinforcements for a renewal of the attack upon Osman's position.

The concentration of all eyes upon the fighting at Plevna had caused all interested onlookers to forget for the moment the



important operations in the south conducted by General Gourko. This officer, in ignorance of the disaster which had overtaken his colleagues, was continuing his advance towards the passes which led through the small range of mountains, called the Kara Dag, and which opened into the plains of Roumelia. But he, in his turn, was destined to receive a check, owing indirectly to the power which Abdul Hamid was even then beginning to discover of selecting the right man for the right place. Almost as soon as he had personally undertaken the direction of affairs, the Sultan had recalled Suleiman Pasha from Montenegro, where his ability was wasting itself in a series of skirmishes with a handful of savage mountaineers, and had given him command of the Turkish army corps at Adrianople. In anticipation of Gourko's advance, Suleiman took up a position which would enable him to meet it, came it from front or flank, by eastern or western passes.



The Russian's plan of attack was to send the Bulgarian forces on a flanking movement to the Turkish right and left, while he personally led the centre through the passes of the Kara Dagħ. Of these, one, the Kara Dagħ, was captured; but Suleiman, who had meanwhile concentrated his force, fell upon Gourko with 30,000 men at Eski Zagra, and drove him back in full retreat, with a loss of 8000 men, through the Schipka and Hankoi passes. It is only fair to say that, in the opinion of military experts, this second defeat, like that of Plevna, was due as much to the recklessness of the attack as to the bravery and skill of the defence. The feeble resistance with which they had been met in the early days of the invasion had caused the Russian generals to despise their enemy, and they altogether neglected to take count of the change which had been brought about by the active interference of one clear-headed and intrepid man. These two great battles made it

clear to the Russian staff that the Turkish soldier had lost none of his ancient courage, and that the initial successes of the war had been gained more through the neglect or treachery of the Turkish commander, than by any extraordinary strategic skill of their own or their subordinates'. In the face of the 70,000 Turkish soldiers concentrated in and around Lovatz and Plevna, there was nothing for the Grand Duke Nicholas but to wait the arrival of the new levy of 100,000 men summoned from Russia, and now on the march through Roumania.

A very slight study of the map will be sufficient to convince the most unmilitary inquirer that here and now was Turkey's one great opportunity of retrieving the fortune of the campaign, and of driving every single hostile soldier back across the Danube. The time had come for a change of policy from one of defence to one of combined attack. But this was impossible for two reasons: one was the inefficient

state of the intelligence department, and the consequent slowness with which the news of events from the front reached the Sultan ; and the other was the absence of any one really great general, into whose hands his Majesty could with confidence place the conduct of the campaign. So the Russians were left alone to fortify their position in the Schipka Pass, and await the arrival of reinforcements to fill up the gaps in the ranks made by the bloody defeat before Plevna.

Up to the 16th of August, the two armies remained almost inactive, the only shots fired being in reconnaissances and small affairs of outposts. On that day, however, Suleiman Pasha determined to attempt the recapture of the pass by assault. This time the conditions of the attack on Plevna were reversed. The Russians were behind earthworks, and the Turks were in the exposed ground. For five days and nights the struggle went on, and the pass was ablaze with fire. But the Russians held the position,

and Suleiman fell back with a loss of 4000 men. The repulse had no deterrent effect upon his colleagues Osman and Muhamed Ali, and a week later, they, in their turn, attacked the army under the Grand Duke ; but, though their troops fought with the same desperate courage as those under Suleiman, they met with the same fate, and were finally repulsed. By this time the Russians were strongly reinforced, and even in a position to renew the attack, and General Skobeleff, the warrior-leader of the Pan-slavists, the most brilliant soldier and one of the most engaging men of our time, advanced against Lovatz, with a force three times greater than that of its defenders. After a gallant resistance, Lovatz fell, and the road lay open to Plevna.

Now occurred the most striking incident of the war, one which covered with glory both victors and vanquished, and rendered illustrious for ever the names of the two men who headed the opposing forces.

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On September 6th, Skobelev, with 100,000 men and 250 guns, opened fire on the out-works of Plevna. Two days were taken up in an artillery duel between the Russian field-batteries and the Turkish redoubts. For every shot fired by the former, a shell was sent back by the latter. Towards the close of September 8th, Skobelev led an infantry assault on the first position of the defence. He was driven back with fearful slaughter, and again betook himself to his guns. For two more days the heavens above Plevna were rent with the roar of heavy ordnance, and the air was darkened with flying shot and shell. On the 11th a dense fog put an end to the bombardment, and, as at Inkerman, the Russians availed themselves of this natural ally to once more attempt with the bayonet what the guns had failed to achieve. They attacked from three different points. Again and again the Russian infantry flung themselves against the breastwork, only to be met by a burning wall of steel and flame, and

hurled back with thinned and shattered ranks into the cover of the fog, there to reform, and again to charge madly forward, Throughout that day, through all that night, and through the next long day, the desperate work went on. Rank after rank of the attacking forces fell like swathes of corn before the reaper, filling the ditches of the defending fortifications; and not for the first time in their history, the Russian soldiers used the bodies of their fallen comrades as bridges by which to reach their enemy.

Over all this blood and fire and slaughter Skobeleff ruled like the spirit of war incarnate. Bare-headed, with broken sword in hand, with his tunic hanging in ribbons from his shoulders, his handsome face blackened by smoke, and his long, light whiskers scorched with flame, his eyes flashing defiance, and his voice shouting encouragement, he seemed to his soldiers to be everywhere at once. Whenever a regiment, blinded, broken, disheartened, staggered

back from a still uncaptured earthwork, Skobeleff was always amongst them ; his commanding accents calling them to re-form, his very presence giving to the rawest Roumanian recruit the steadiness and *sang-froid* of a veteran soldier. Then when, with breath regained and ranks re-closed, the thrice baffled battalion awaited the word to again plunge forward into the fiery rain of death, it was always the general's voice that gave it, and the general's broad shoulders which were six feet ahead of the bayonets of the front rank.

But not even the superhuman efforts of a Skobeleff, nor the dauntless valour with which he inspired his soldiers, could prevail against modern weapons of war, fired from behind earthworks by men as dogged and valiant as the Ottoman troops ; and at the close of the third day, when the bugles sounded the "cease fire," the total result of this, the most heroic and desperate assault in the annals of war, was the capture of one redoubt.



As it was the most gallant, so probably it will be the last. Never again will bayonet match itself against breech-loader. The Russian generals had learned the lesson, and they availed themselves of the teaching. They at once adopted the new and only possible tactics by which a really fortified position can now be reduced—that of investment and starvation. But this was destined to be a slower process than any one in Europe anticipated, for it was well on in December (the 10th), before Osman Pasha, seeing that it was impossible to hold out much longer, in the face of the rapidly depleting supplies, decided to risk everything upon the hazard of a desperate sortie. Sallying out at the head of the garrison, he carried the first line of the besiegers' trenches, and cut to pieces the troops who held them. But his soldiers, weakened by want of food and the ceaseless activity of the long defence, were unable to make headway against the superior numbers of the investing army,



and retreating once more behind his earth-works, he ran up the white flag. When the victors marched in, they entered, not a town, but a charnel-house.

We must now turn aside for a moment to take a brief look at events in Asia, for it must not be forgotten that Turkey was fighting for her life in two continents. The Asiatic frontier had been crossed by the Russian army under the Grand Duke Michael on April 25th; its immediate objects of attack being Kars, Bazazet, Ardahan, and the important commercial cities of Batoum and Erzeroum. Of these Ardahan fell after a sharp resistance on the 17th of May, and Bazazet was abandoned without a struggle. But, as in Europe, these first victories of the invaders were not destined to continue in unbroken succession. The advance had to be made over a vast extent of territory, and the nature of the country enabled the defenders to keep up a series of small but harassing attacks. On June 20th, Moukhta Pasha, who held the Asiatic

command, opened an attack in force on the left division of the Russian army. The struggle went on for a fortnight, and on July 5th the Russians were driven back across the frontier with heavy loss. The Turks re-entered Bazazet, and on July 19th the Russians had entirely disappeared from the district. Moukhta then marched to the relief of Kars, near which the investing army held a strongly entrenched position on a hill, and from this he succeeded in driving them at the point of the bayonet; and, although his general attack was a failure, the Russians were so far crippled that they were compelled to wait until October 1st for reinforcements before renewing the attack. Then for fourteen days a series of big battles took place round Kars, and, on the 15th, Moukhta fell back on Erzeroum, leaving the former stronghold in a complete circle of investment. It fell on November 18th, after a fierce and gallant resistance. Meanwhile, the Russians, who in Asia as in Europe were in overwhelming strength,

pursued the army of Moukhta to the very gates of Erzeroum, and occupied the heights north and west of the town on November 4th. To the east and south lay seven or eight miles of swampy marshes, which rendered complete investment almost impossible, and the only practicable tactics were a series of small attacks, successfully met by the Turkish general until December 27th, when he was recalled to Constantinople. As a matter of fact neither Erzeroum nor Batoum were ever captured, both remaining in possession of the Turkish army when the armistice was signed on January 31st in the following year; and, had the dispute between Turkey and her enemy been left for decision to the campaign in Asia Minor, the problems which came before the Congress of Berlin for settlement would have received very different solutions.

It is time now to return to the Balkans, and bring this brief review of the war to a close. On September 17th, Suleiman had made another effort to dislodge the Russians

from the Schipka, but he found the position too strongly entrenched, and the attempt had finally to be given up.

After the fall of Plevna, it seemed to the friends of peace all over the world that the time had come for European intervention, and all eyes were turned towards London to catch any indications of action on the part of the English Government; but Lord Beaconsfield still held his hand, and the British fleet remained at anchor. There can be very little doubt that the Czar himself would at this time have welcomed any intervention that would have allowed him to make peace on anything like honourable terms. His army had sustained terrific losses, his finances were depleted, and, above all, winter was upon him, bringing with it everything that could intensify the horrors of war. No sign of negotiation came from Constantinople, and it was evident that, in the absence of friendly intervention, the Sultan was determined to fight it out "to the last

ounce." To retain his armies *in statu quo* through the long winter months was out of the question. Equally so was a retreat across the Balkans, and thus there was nothing for it but to order an advance to the very shores of the Bosphorus. These orders General Gourko proceeded to carry out. After another week's hard fighting the Balkans were finally crossed ; on the 3rd of January, 1877, Sophia was occupied ; on the 9th the last battle of the Schipka ended in the surrender of 30,000 Turkish soldiers, and on the 15th the Russians marched into Philippopolis. After one more desperate attack to check the victorious advance, an armistice was concluded on the last day in January.

The subsequent negotiations lasted for another month ; and on March 3rd was signed the famous Treaty of San Stefano, with a brief glance at which I will conclude this chapter.

It stipulated, in the first place, the complete independence of Montenegro, Servia,

and Roumania. Its main provision had reference to Bulgaria, which it proposed to create "an autonomous tributary province," of which the Sultan should be "suzerain," not sovereign. It should extend from the Danube, on both sides of the Balkans, to the Ægean Sea. Its preliminary administration—i.e. for a period of ten years—was to be vested in a commissioner appointed by the Czar, and during this term the Russian army was to remain in occupation. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the reforms proposed and rejected at the Conference of Constantinople were to be carried out under Russian and Austrian supervision ; and the future government of Epirus, Thessaly, and the other parts of Turkey in Europe, not otherwise specifically dealt with, was entrusted to a special commission whose duty it would be to report to the Sublime Porte, "who will consult the Imperial Government of Russia" before carrying out the recommendation of the commissioners.

Further articles bound Turkey to pay to Russia a war indemnity of one hundred and forty-one millions sterling ; thirty-one millions in cash, and, in place of the balance, a vast tract of territory in Asia Minor, comprising Ardahan, Batoum, Bazazet, and the country as far as the Saganlough. The portion of Bessarabia, taken from Russia at the termination of the Crimean War, was to be retroceded ; and the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles were to remain open for ever to commercial navigation with the Russian ports on the Black Sea. The Treaty ended with certain provisions for the gradual withdrawal of the Russian army.

The reception with which the publication of this Treaty was met in Europe at once made it evident that its provisions had not the slightest chance of being carried out. In England, especially, it created an excitement which augured badly for the long continuance of peace. Two-thirds of the British public greeted it with a



shout of contemptuous laughter, ending in an angry growl.

The slightest manifestation by the English Government of an intention towards active interference sent popular enthusiasm up to boiling-point, and even the leader of the Opposition and his followers had scarcely a word to say on behalf of the demands of the "divine figure from the North." The feeling in England was reflected with greater or less degrees of intensity in every capital in Europe, and Russia began to realize that, although she might outrage Justice in her conduct towards her defeated enemy, it was another and an altogether different thing to pursue a course which ran too counter to the material interests of the European Powers. She was soon informed that the Treaties of 1856 and 1871 were not to be abrogated without consultation with, and consent of, the parties whose signatures were attached to those Treaties. In the event of her, flushed with victory, setting Europe at defiance, England took

steps to maintain her own particular and individual interests, and Lord Beaconsfield performed the most popular act of his life, by ordering the British fleet to anchor in sight of the minarets of Constantinople.

After much delay in diplomatic correspondence, the Emperor discovered that the Treaty of San Stefano was only a "preliminary treaty," and in May, 1878, arrangements were made for the representatives of the great Powers to meet in Congress at Berlin in the month of June.

The work of this Congress will form the subject of a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE BERLIN CONGRESS.

THE attitude of Russia at the Congress of Berlin was very much that of a wild beast cheated of its prey at the moment when it was about to close its jaws upon the toothsome morsel, and it is small wonder that the armistice was frequently infringed by the Russian troops, and that it needed the active pressure of the great Powers to preserve that temporary peace. We have said already and may have again to say some hard things of Lord Beaconsfield's Government, for I believe that no one who studies the facts can have any reasonable doubt that a little Palmerstonian firmness and decision displayed at the time of the

accession of Abdul Hamid would have effectually prevented all the bloodshed and misery of the Russo-Turkish war, would have secured practical self-government to the Christian provinces of the Porte, and would have obviated the difficulties and dangers which at the moment I write are even now looming in South-Eastern Europe. But in justice to a dead minister's memory let me say that, although I believe it was owing to Lord Beaconsfield's lack of determination that things are not very much better, it is equally true that it is due to his policy that they are not very much worse ; and that the main reason which influenced the Czar in staying the march of his troops upon Constantinople, and thus crowning the well-laid and persistent policy of years, was the fact that the Turkish capital, thanks to Lord Beaconsfield, was within easy range of the guns of the English fleet. The English minister hesitated to strike at the right moment ; but strike he did at last, and the effect of his so striking was the trans-

formation of the Treaty of San Stefano into the Treaty of Berlin.

The Plenipotentiaries met in the German capital on June 17, 1878, and they at once set about the consideration of the condition of those provinces which had been the nominal and ostensible cause of the Russian invasion.

As the mastery of India by England is only made possible and desirable by the religious and social antagonisms existing amongst the people of Hindostan, so the government of these provinces by the Sultan had been due to the difficulties in the way of the united action of Christian, Mussulman, Slav, Greek, and Turk. This was as well known in St. Petersburg as in Constantinople, and the traditional policy of Russia had been to ignore these differences and jealousies, and to endeavour thus to present the European provinces to the great Powers as a spectacle of fraternity and agreement. European statesmen had hitherto supported the rule of the Sultan in

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Constantinople as the only thing possible ; just as an English Radical maintains the English power in India on the ground that its withdrawal would work greater mischief than its retention. If once it could be proved to the satisfaction of the Western Powers that the Christian subjects of the Sultan were united and agreed, and could dwell together in peace without the strong hand of an over-lord, the *raison-d'être* of the Crescent in Europe would be gone. In the years just previous to the outbreak of the war, however, in spite of the best efforts and intrigues of Russia, a serious "split" had occurred, not between Turk and Christian, but between Slav and Greek, and to use the words of Lord Salisbury at the Congress, "The Slavs who formerly recognized the authority of the Greek Patriarch had given their adherence to a new ecclesiastical organization which claimed their submission. This separation had caused frequent disputes and even collisions between the two races, and the interests of the one form of religion,

its character, its schools, and its very existence were in jeopardy at the hands of the other."

At the time of the meeting of the Berlin Congress the strong light of events and the enhanced interest naturally awakened in the affairs of South-Eastern Europe rendered it impossible for Russia to altogether ignore the existence of these initial obstacles to a settlement upon an entirely new basis. Her representative therefore rather flanked than met Lord Salisbury's statement by the declaration that the objects of the Emperor were—

"To give to the Christian subjects of the Porte autonomous existence secured by effective guarantees, and whilst diminishing territorial changes as much as possible, to ameliorate the position and assure the well-being of the provinces of European Turkey which have been the scene of such deplorable calamities."

It would have been easier to have put faith in the sincerity of the desire "to



diminish territorial changes as much as possible" had it not been for the Treaty of San Stefano which Prince Gortschakoff had in his pocket.

England's view of the duties of the Congress was stated by Lord Salisbury. He said, "It is our task to replace Turkey, not upon the footing of her former independence, for it would be impossible to entirely annihilate the results of the war, but to restore to her a relative independence which shall permit her efficaciously to protect the strategical, political, and commercial interests of which she is to remain the guardian;"—which declaration I may incidentally remark meant the tearing up of the Treaty of San Stefano.

After the preliminary statement of these good intentions, the President of the Congress, Prince Bismarck, who has a way of hustling shams to one side, and hitting the right nail on the head, pointed out that the real problem to be solved was, "above all the delimitation and the organization of

Bulgaria," and he proposed "to open the discussion by examining in the first instance such of the stipulations of the Treaty of San Stefano as refer particularly to the future organization of Bulgaria." The suggestion was adopted, as are most suggestions coming from the same quarter, and for the next few days the discussions of the Congress were a diplomatic battle between the English and Russian plenipotentiaries as to the little more or the little less of Bulgaria which should remain under the direct rule of the Sultan, the final result of which was that the Balkans were settled to mark the southern limit of the new autonomous province.

Subsequent events have proved that this yielding of Russia to the pressure of Europe headed by the English minister was more apparent than real. From that hour to this she has never ceased to show how little she regarded the Treaty of Berlin as a final settlement, and even as

these words are being written, every telegram from the East gives evidence of the restless activity of her agents in the young principality. It is due to her, however, to say that even at the moment of yielding she gave fair warning of her dissatisfaction and future intentions. On the 26th June, Prince Gortschakoff, who had been for some days absent through ill-health, expressed his desire to say a few words "inspired by the spirit of conciliation." These are the words which the spirit inspired:—

"Lord Beaconsfield has in a preliminary sitting expressed the desire that the Sultan should be master in his own dominions, but he thinks that the existence of this authority depends on certain conditions, without which genius itself could not accomplish miracles. In his opinion these conditions are administrative and political. It is important, from an administrative point of view, that the inhabitants of the provinces which shall not have been declared independent by the Congress

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may be assured of their possessions, lives, &c., &c., not by promises on paper, which might, like the former ones, not be carried out, and prevent neither abuses nor exactions, but by a European agreement, which may assure their efficacy and inspire the populations with confidence. From a political point of view, Prince Gortschakoff observes that instead of an English, French or Russian preponderance which history shows to have existed at Constantinople at different periods, he would wish that there should be in the East, no preponderance whatever, not more for Russia than for any other State, and he would desire to see substituted for the paltry and deleterious struggle of individual rivalries on the shifting ground of Constantinople, a collective action of the great Powers which would spare the Ottoman Porte many illusions and many faults." Then making use of an expression which will certainly appear to every man competent in the art of war to be justified

by the heroic efforts of the Russian armies, he observed that "Russia brings hither laurels, and he hopes that the Congress will convert them into olive branches. He adds that his two colleagues in the last two sittings have made very great concessions to the desire for peace which inspires Russia equally with all Europe. They have presented not phrases but facts to the high assembly. He feels assured that the members of the Congress render full justice to his country in this respect. He and his colleagues will persist in the same course. He therefore discards the thought that any power whatever wishes to oppose the great and splendid result of peace, which reigns supreme over all the interest of Europe, by raising its demands to limits which it would be impossible for the great sovereign, and the great nation which he represents, to overstep. He repeats that he cannot admit the possibility of a deed which would be severely judged both by contemporaries and by history."

Two days later, on June 28th, the Congress had to deal with that side of the many-sided Eastern Question which touched upon the interests of the Empire of Austro-Hungary, and the case for the Double Eagle is so admirably and clearly put by its representative, Count Andrassy, that I cannot do better than give it in his own words. Of this "Bozno-Herzegovinian question," as he called it, he said,—

"The population of these countries is composed of Mussulmans, Orthodox Christians and Catholics fanatical in the antagonism which divides them, and living not in separate districts but pell-mell in the same localities, the same towns, the same villages. The Sublime Porte would have the task of reuniting all the opposite elements in the mould of an autonomous administration [presuming that the stipulations of the San Stefano treaty were ratified by the Congress]. It would have to proceed to the repatriation of the

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refugees dispersed in Austro-Hungary and Montenegro, and make provisions for their maintenance, and, in order to enable them to recommence peaceful labour, to provide them with grain for the sowing of their lands, and with materials for the reconstruction of their houses. It would have to undertake the settlement of the Agrarian question, the principal cause of the periodical agitations which have disturbed those countries, a problem bristling with obstacles, in the midst of a population distracted by religious hatred and social rivalries, a problem that a strong and impartial power can alone solve, in a country where all the real estate is in the hands of Mussulmans, while the Christian agricultural labourers or farmers form the majority of the inhabitants. At the same time the Sublime Porte would be called upon to make sacrifices beyond its means. Article 14 [of the Treaty of San Stefano] provides that it shall not be permitted to recover the arrears of taxes,



and obliges it to renounce during another ten years the current revenue of those provinces. Assuredly it is no reproach to Turkey, nor is it casting doubts on her good will, to affirm that she would not be equal to this task. It would be impossible for her to accomplish it under normal circumstances. It is all the more impracticable at the conclusion of a war as yet scarcely brought to an end, in the presence, above all, of the revival of the antagonism which displays itself with greater force than ever at the beginning of the disturbances, now that districts inhabited by Mussulmans are, or are about to be placed under the Servian and Montenegrin rule. The apprehension has but too good foundation, that autonomy under such circumstances, far from bringing about the pacification of these countries, would only make them the permanent hot-bed of troubles."

It would have been impossible for the Sultan's representatives themselves to

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have shown more forcibly the utter impracticability of the Russian proposals, or to have demonstrated more clearly the *mala fides* which had prompted them. The Russian plenipotentiaries appeared to feel this, for without a word they threw up their case, and the scheme of autonomy of Bozno-Herzegovina went straight into the waste-paper basket. But although Count Andrassy had so promptly and satisfactorily disposed of the proposals of Russia, it appeared that he was altogether without any counter proposals of his own, and he ended his remarks with a platitude about "the desirable pacification of the said provinces." In these circumstances any one not versed in the devious paths of diplomacy would have supposed that now was the time for the president to call upon the parties most interested, the Turkish plenipotentiaries, to state their views as to the ability of their Government to solve the problem ; but scarcely had the Austrian Statesman resumed his seat, when it be-

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came evident that a good deal of the business of the Congress was done elsewhere than in the room in which it met. If Count Andrassy was too modest to urge the interests of his own nation, he had at least made sure of the good offices of some one who could do it for him. Lord Salisbury rose, and, taking for granted that the Russian proposals for autonomy were dismissed altogether from the consideration of the Congress, he began his argument by assuming that the Porte was no longer able to occupy and administer the provinces under discussion, and he pointed out that even if it could, it would have nothing to gain, thereby. "Boznia and Herzegovina," he said, "contribute nothing to the wealth or to the strength of the Porte. It was established at the Conference of Constantinople, that their revenues did not equal the expenses which were incurred on their account. The expense necessary for defending them would be enormous, and they have no

strategical value for Turkey. The Porte, then, would give evidence of the highest wisdom if it refused to burden itself any longer with a task which surpasses its strength, and by entrusting it to a power capable of discharging it, would avert serious dangers from the Turkish Empire."

One smiles thoughtfully when one remembers how the whirligig of time brings round its revenges, and how Lord Salisbury has now so frequently to reply to arguments almost identical with this in the mouths of Irish Home Rulers. However, let us hear him to the end. "For these motives," he went on, "the Government of the Queen proposes to the assembled Powers, that the Congress should decide that the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina shall be occupied and administered by Austria-Hungary"!!

And such is the histrionic ability of diplomats, that Count Andrassy never even smiled!

Lord Beaconsfield, who was the equal of

any Austrian born in the art of keeping his countenance under difficulties, and who always keenly enjoyed taking part in a farce, immediately followed his foreign minister. He repeated and confirmed his colleague as to the inability of Turkey to maintain order and stability in the two provinces, and as to the very bad bargain they were ; and " therefore, " he said—and he never in his life said anything so delicately humorous with so grave a face, " therefore, no nation is better able than Austria-Hungary to accomplish at this moment, by the occupation of those provinces, the great duty of maintaining order, securing and establishing prosperity, and fortifying definitely the Ottoman Porte *by augmenting its weight in European affairs.*"

After Prince Gortschakoff had uttered some commonplace about peace, the Sultan's representatives made their voices heard in protest against the English proposal. They said that the Sublime Porte was quite confident of its own power to

establish order in the provinces. And that it engaged to set about the work immediately, by despatching thither High Commissioners charged with the duty of organizing a police, and of housing and maintaining the refugees until such time as agricultural labour could be recommenced.

To the arguments of the English plenipotentiaries that Turkey had been unable to maintain order in the provinces for three years, they replied that for nearly the whole of that period the Porte had been compelled to deal with open hostilities on the part of two of the neighbouring provinces, besides being for the last twelve months engaged in a great war, and yet in spite of all this the Ottoman authority had remained intact in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Now just at the moment when peace was about to be concluded, and the Porte permitted to concentrate its power upon internal reforms, was it not unreasonable that it should be compelled to hand over these particular provinces to

another power? As to Bosnia not being of much financial value to the Ottoman Empire—that was true—but it did not follow that its occupation by another power might not be a source of great inconvenience. Of the agrarian difficulty, of which a good deal had been made, they ventured to remind the Congress that Bosnia was not the only part of Europe in which similar difficulties had arisen, but no one had ever suggested “*having recourse to means of the nature of those which are now proposed for Bosnia.*”

[Here a little bird informs us that Lord Salisbury unconsciously muttered, “Ireland.”] They hoped that the Congress, taking note of the engagements they were prepared to enter into in the name of their Imperial master, would refuse to assent to proposals for an occupation, which would give rise to graver troubles than it could remedy. When Caratheodory Pasha sat down, Prince Bismarck reminded the plenipotentiaries of Turkey that “the



Congress had met, not for the safety of certain geographical positions, for the maintenance of which the Porte might be anxious, but in order to preserve the peace of Europe, now and in the future. His Serene Highness points out to the Ottoman representatives that without the intervention of Congress they would find themselves face to face with the articles of the Treaty of San Stefano as a whole ; that this intervention secures to them a much larger and more fertile province than Bosnia, namely, the territory extending from the Ægean Sea to the Balkans." He therefore added that he remained persuaded that the Ottoman Government will soon address fresh instructions to their plenipotentiaries, for which the Congress would wait."

On July 4th these further instructions arrived, and the final answer of the Sultan was laid before the Congress. "The Imperial Ottoman Government has taken into very serious consideration the views

set forth by the Congress relative to the proper means for bringing about the pacification of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It places entire confidence in them, and reserves to itself the right to come to a direct and preliminary understanding with the Cabinet of Vienna on the subject."

The remaining articles of the Treaty of San Stefano were dealt with more briefly than that which treated of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The independence of Servia was accepted without opposition, but the statement on this subject made by Caratheodory Pasha is worth putting on record.

"Upon the first occasion which presents itself to the Congress to pronounce upon the stipulations of independence inserted in the Treaty of San Stefano, Caratheodory Pasha begs permission of the Congress to accompany his opinion with a few words. It was in view of a great European interest, as well as in that of Servia itself, that Europe had sanctioned the bond of vassal-

age, which has hitherto united this principality to the Suzerain Court. That Turkey has exercised the right conferred upon her by the treaties with a moderation which has never belied itself, not even in the midst of the severest trials ; that this right has afforded a really useful standpoint for the easy settlement of the difficulties which at different times have keenly interested Europe ; but this sovereignty understood in this manner, has assured to Servia a real independence, and that she herself has several times over acknowledged its great value—these are incontestible facts. The Treaty of San Stefano set on foot a new system for this country, as well as for others which were nearly in similar circumstances, by detaching them from the centre which had been assigned to them. If the idea of independence has the upper hand to-day in the councils of Europe, Turkey will not oppose it, for she is confident that this independence, which it is for the Congress to sanction, will be real and honest, that it

will be assumed by the countries in full recognition of the rights as well as of the duties thereby imposed upon them; for from thenceforth it will be respected, and will not diminish the guarantees of European public order, which the bond of suzerainty had sufficed to create and maintain."

At about this moment Russia had an opportunity of manifesting the genuineness of her regard for liberty, and she did it in her own peculiar way. The English and French representatives were anxious that the principle of religious liberty in the provinces should be placed beyond question by express enactment, but Prince Gortschakoff, with the traditional Russian hatred of liberty in any form, civil or religious, objected to its extension to the Jews, who, in his opinion, were a "real scourge to the native population." But on this point all the other plenipotentiaries, including those of Turkey, were unanimous, and the outcome of the discussion was Article 35 of

the Treaty of Berlin, which settled the matter beyond dispute or doubt.

The Congress then passed on to the question of the rectification of the Greek frontier, and on this occasion the Greek ambassadors at Berlin were introduced, and their opinions consulted. It had been the wish of England that Greece should be formally represented in the Congress, but the proposal had been abandoned out of deference to the wishes of Russia, France, and Turkey. On June 29th, the ambassador, M. Ranza and the Greek Foreign Minister, M. Delyanis, attended and made known the needs of their Government. M. Delyanis stated that his nation desired her own independence, and the cession to her of Candia and the provinces bordering on the kingdom, in order, as he put it, "to secure peace and national existence." In support of this claim, he urged that these provinces had for long been in a condition of ceaseless revolt; that Candia was at that moment in full in-

surrection, and that it would be "a work of justice and humanity to satisfy the national aspirations of these countries, to fulfil their wishes so often expressed, and, for the future, to spare them the destruction and catastrophe to which they expose themselves in order to gain a national existence." He dwelt at some length and with great emphasis on the state of feeling existing among the Greeks, both those who were within and those who were without the kingdom ; but perhaps it will be better to give his exact words.

"The natives of the Greek provinces of the Ottoman Empire," he said, "are numbered by thousands. Many hold high office in all departments of the Government, civil, naval, and military. Others stand high in the world of commerce. The echo which the news of an Hellenic insurrection in Turkey finds in their hearts is too powerful not to move them. It causes many to give their lives, and more to empty their pockets. Such a state of affairs

constantly gives rise to serious consequences within the kingdom, and renders the position of the Government very difficult. Unable to refuse its sympathies to the Greeks of the province in question, united as they are to Free Greece by the bonds of history, race, and common misfortunes ; unable to proclaim an indifference which would smother the just hopes which the Greeks of Turkey have always founded on their free brethren ; every Greek Government is powerless to struggle against the stream. Should it ever venture to do so, it would be overturned by the current, which would carry away the whole country into the struggle of the insurgent province. Even if the Government did attempt to resist the national enthusiasm, it would be unable to do so, owing to the conformation of the frontiers, which an army of 100,000 men would not be able to guard sufficiently well, to prevent the clandestine departure of volunteers."

The Greek representatives then with-



drew, and it was not until the sitting of July 5th that the Greek question came up for settlement. The discussion was opened by M. Waddington, and he proposed the following resolution as an indication to Turkey of the intentions of Europe, and as an intimation to Greece of the limits beyond which she would not be permitted to go:—

“The Congress invites the Sublime Porte to arrange with Greece for a rectification of frontiers in Thessaly and Epirus, and is of opinion that this rectification might follow a certain line along each shore (duly described). The Congress is confident that the interested parties will succeed in coming to an agreement. At the same time, to facilitate the success of the negotiations, the Powers are prepared to offer their direct mediation to the two parties.”

This proposal was acted upon, and the question was finally left to be settled by the two Powers directly interested. It was in this discussion that Lord Beaconsfield

made use, for the first time, of one of his often quoted and historic phrases. Referring to Greece, he said, "No one can doubt as to the future of this country, *but States, like individuals which have a future, are able to wait.*" He added that for his part he would not recommend coercion as a means towards a rectification of frontiers, and said that in his eyes "the Sultan, tried by such great misfortunes, deserved much respect and sympathy," and he felt "a hope and even a conviction, that an equitable solution of the question of frontiers would be accepted by the Sultan."

The clauses of the Treaty of San Stefano, which provided for the independence of Roumania and the retrocession to Russia of Bessarabia, gave rise to a long and sharp discussion between the representatives of Russia and England, the latter insisting on the securing of the freedom of navigation of the Danube, a point which had been, oddly enough, overlooked by the framers of the preliminary treaty. In this

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discussion Count Schouvaloff accused the Roumanians of gross ingratitude in opposing the rearrangement of territory, and it was finally decided to hear the Roumanians themselves upon the matter. Then M. Cogalniceano was introduced, and he at once made it clear that not only did his country very strongly object to giving up any part of her present possessions, but that, on the contrary, she desired to acquire the islands at the mouths of the Danube. After his withdrawal the dispute continued. Prince Gortschakoff and Count Schouvaloff declined to budge an inch in their demands for the retrocession of Bessarabia, and as their master was "the man in possession," they finally had their way, and Roumania received compensation in the shape of one of the coveted islands and a new slice of territory.

The independence of Montenegro was decided upon without discussion, and the Congress then turned to the question of the navigation of the Danube, which the

retrocession of Bessarabia had rendered a burning one for the other River States. Count Andrassy proposed the following four stipulations which were finally accepted as a basis for settlement :—

1. The neutralization of the Danube as far as the Iron gates.
2. The permanence of the European Commission.
3. The participation of Roumania in the work of the Commission.
4. The assignment to Austria-Hungary alone of the works to be constructed at the Iron gates.

The Congress now approached the consideration of those clauses of the Treaty of San Stefano which provided for the payment of the war indemnity in money and territory. The latter portion of the indemnity having been defined, Caratheodory Pasha addressed the Congress on the subject of the former. He said that the great advantages which the fortune of war had already given to Russia were in themselves

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a sufficient compensation for the pecuniary sacrifices she had made. He pointed out that the enormous and incalculable losses which Turkey had sustained made it extremely doubtful whether it would be possible for her to pay the sum demanded. But even if she could, it would only be at the cost of rendering her quite unable to undertake the reforms of administration which she quite as clearly as the other Powers recognized as vitally necessary. Thus, if Europe aided Russia in exacting a large money payment, in addition to a cession of territory, it would be practically rendering desperate the condition of the people for whose welfare it affected to be anxious—and it would break up the Ottoman Government itself, whose conservation it had repeatedly stated was one of its main objects.

This appeal in the name of the people on whose account all the recent blood and treasure had ostensibly been shed, although lost upon Prince Gortschakoff and Count

Schouvaloff, was not without its effect on the other plenipotentiaries, and it was decided to omit all reference to a money indemnity from the text of the Treaty.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> The following is from the text of a despatch written by Lord Salisbury, setting out the intentions of the Congress as to the payment of the indemnity:—

“The pecuniary indemnity, to which many objections were taken by His Majesty’s Government, has been excluded altogether from the Treaty. The Congress declined to revise a contract which was an infraction of the Treaty of Paris, and which it was therefore within the competence of two independent powers to conclude. But declarations were made in Congress, and are recorded upon the Protocol, *which profoundly modify its practical effect*. The Russian plenipotentiaries declared that Russia would not seek to annex territory in satisfaction of the indemnity, and that they would not contend that it should be preferred either to debts guaranteed by the Governments, or to debts in respect to which Turkish revenues had been hypothecated. The English plenipotentiaries declared that they could not recognize in the indemnity any claims of priority over them of any kind which were anterior to it in date. It results from these declarations that Turkey is not internationally bound and cannot be compelled to pay any portion of the indemnity, until the claims of all the creditors of loans anterior to the war have been paid in full. If the prosperity of Turkey should ever increase to

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Upon the question of religious liberty throughout the whole Turkish Empire, which was the next dish on the President's *menu*, Caratheodory Pasha read a message from the Sultan, which we will give at length, as it helps to shed some light upon his personal character. It ran as follows :—

“ In presence of the declarations made in Congress in various circumstances in favour of religious toleration, you are authorized to state that the sentiments of the Sublime Porte on this point are entirely in harmony with the objects sought by Europe. Its most steadfast traditions, its secular policy, the instincts of its populations all tend to this result. Throughout the whole Empire

such a height as to satisfy this condition, then the indemnity may undoubtedly be demanded. But in such a contingency it will no longer be a disproportional or even a heavy burden upon the finances of Turkey. The stipulation must be regarded as one which in its actual form is not contrary to international law, but of which the performance must, in the nature of things, be postponed to a period infinitely remote.”



religions widely differing are professed by millions of the Sultan's subjects, and no one has been annoyed in his faith or in the exercise of his creed. The Imperial Government is determined to maintain this principle in all its force, and to give it all the extension it admits of."

In submitting the Imperial *communiqué* to the Congress, Caratheodory expressed a hope that in any article of the new treaty dealing with the question of religious liberty reference would be made to the fact that the principle was already recognized throughout the whole of his Sovereign's dominions. This hope was realized, and Article 62 of the treaty commences thus: "The Sublime Porte having expressed the wish to *maintain* the principle of religious liberty, and give it the widest scope, the contracting parties take note of this *spontaneous declaration*."

How many of the persecuted subjects of the Czar must long for a similar "spontaneous declaration" from his Imperial lips!

The territorial cessions in Asia, to which the Congress next turned its attention, had already been privately discussed between the English and Russian ministers, and the latter had agreed to give up their claims to Erzeroum, Bayazet, and the Valley of Alusherd; but insisted on the cession of Ardahan, Kars, and Batoum. In regard to this latter town, I should like to call my reader's attention to the following declaration made to the Congress by Prince Gortschakoff, as it affords a text from which to preach<sup>6</sup> an instructive sermon on the ways and manners of Muscovite diplomacy, and on the Russian view of the nature of a promise,—“I am authorized to declare,” the Prince said, “that my august master, exercising his right of sovereignty, will declare Batoum a free port. This meets

<sup>6</sup> Such a sermon was in fact preached by Lord Rosebery when he was at the Foreign Office. His despatch protesting against the violation of the Treaty of Berlin in the matter of Batoum being, perhaps, the most plain-spoken piece of writing ever addressed by one great Power to another.

the material interests of all commercial nations, and more particularly perhaps those of Great Britain, whose commerce employs the largest number of vessels." This declaration was styled by Lord Beaconsfield, "a conciliatory step of high value," and Lord Salisbury went so far as to declare that "if the acquisition of Batoum had been maintained under conditions which would have menaced the liberty of the Black Sea, England could not have taken the engagements towards the European Powers to interdict to herself the entry of that sea. *But Batoum having been declared a free and commercial port, the English Government will not decline to renew their engagements under the modifications imposed by the decisions already taken at the Congress.*"

At the present moment Batoum is a strongly-fortified place of war.

The last sittings of the Congress were occupied in discussing proposals made by Prince Gortschakoff and Count Schouvaloff

for the insertion of a special article engaging the great Powers to control and superintend the execution of the various stipulations, and reserving the right to come to an understanding as to the means of enforcing them. But none of the Powers was inclined to pledge itself to a policy of perpetual interference; and Caratheodory Pasha declared that the Sublime Porte "considered itself positively and strictly bound to carry out such engagements as it shall have subscribed to in the same way as all the other Powers, signatories of the Treaty," and he protested very strongly against the proposal of the Russian representatives. This objection was supported by M. Waddington, in words worthy of recordal, as most aptly and succinctly summing up the position of affairs: "The wording proposed to the High Assembly appears to consecrate a species of permanent tutorage imposed upon the Ottoman Government, warranting a series of pretexts for an incessant interference in all the acts

of the Sublime Porte. The evident interest of the Turkish Government is to execute completely, and without reserve, all the decisions of the Congress. Therefore, before throwing a doubt on the intentions distinctly expressed by Turkey, they ought to wait until they shall have seen her occupied in the performance of them, for they have not the right to suppose that the Ottoman Government is unwilling to execute or incapable of executing the stipulations to which it has consented."

Whether the plenipotentiaries felt that the proposals of Russia were unjust, or whether they were unwilling to pledge their respective Governments to a task involving endless difficulty and little or no profit, it were bootless to attempt to decide; but they were unanimously rejected, and on July 13th the plenipotentiaries took a final leave of each other. Prince Gortschakoff and his colleague returned to St. Petersburg, to scheme further troubles for the Sultan. The Turkish representatives be-

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took themselves to Constantinople, to assist in those counsels whose end was revivification and reform ; and Lords Beaconsfield and Salisbury hurried back to London to be welcomed by a shouting crowd, and to congratulate the English people on having secured "Peace—and peace with Honour !"

## CHAPTER III.

## REFORM.

No sooner was the death-grip on his country's throat relaxed than Abdul Hamid set about the task of restoring peace and order in the provinces still left to him, and of initiating the series of reforms upon which he had determined when taking the throne.

Money is the backbone of peace as well as the sinews of war, and it was to the finances of the Empire that the Sultan first turned his attention. Never since Necker seized the purse-strings of revolutionary France had an apparently more hopeless outlook been faced by mortal financier. For years Turkey had been tumbling down that inclined plane of financial



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bankruptcy upon which she had made the first fatal step in the Crimean War. From 1858, until a few years before the deposition of Abdul Aziz, she had periodically raised immense sums on the foreign bourses, until, at the accession of Abdul Hamid, her nominal debt amounted to considerably more than two hundred millions sterling. I say her "nominal" debt, for, of course, not one-half of that sum had found its way into the Imperial treasury, fully fifty per cent. sticking to the fingers of the able and honest financiers who had floated the successive loans. But, besides these external loans, a considerable amount had been borrowed from a syndicate of bankers and merchants of Galata which, under the direction of the Ottoman Bank, has played an important part in the financial affairs of the Empire. Now when a large amount of interest came due, the habitual practice of other Turkish sovereigns had been to pay it by incurring a fresh debt. But this method, pleasant and easy alike in the affairs of individuals

and nations, has an end, and even had Abdul Hamid been inclined to follow the amiable custom of his predecessors (which he was not), he would have found it impossible, for with the stopping of the payment of the coupons the credit of Turkey had come to an end both at home and abroad. Not only, therefore, was no help to be looked for from outside, but the main source of revenue at home—taxation—had to a great extent dried up, for the frightful state of disorganization brought about by the war had rendered it difficult to collect the taxes at all, and even more difficult to get them out of the hands of the local receivers when they were collected. Thus, robbed by the foreign loan-monger in the shape of extortionate interest and commission and by the provincial administrator by way of direct and unblushing peculation, it is little wonder that Turkey had sunk deeper and deeper into the gulf of debt.

Almost the first step which the Sultan took after the conclusion of peace was to

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order a thorough official inquiry into the finances of the Empire, and one of the outcomes of this inquiry was the calling together at Constantinople of a council of representatives of foreign bond-holders to discuss with the Turkish Government the whole question of the external debt. The members of this council were all men of high standing in the world of finance. The English and Dutch creditors were represented by the Hon. R. Bourke, a prominent Conservative politician (now Lord Connemara, Governor of Madras); M. Valfrey, of the French Foreign Office, represented France; and Austria, Germany, and Italy sent delegates of equal repute. These gentlemen met in conference with the chief financial ministers of the Sultan, and after prolonged discussions agreed upon certain propositions to be submitted to him. When these were made known, it "transpired," as the newspapers put it, that, upon examining into the circumstances attendant upon the issue of the various

foreign loans, the sense of honesty and decency of the commissioners had forbid their ever claiming the payment of the nominal amount of the debt, and that they had agreed to its reduction to the sum of one hundred and fifty and a half millions. Having wiped off so large a sum, however, they demanded the assignment to them "absolutely, until the extinction of the debt" of some of the revenues gained by indirect taxation (i.e. the most productive and expansive of all), viz. those from tobacco, salt, stamps, spirits, fisheries, and silk. They further claimed the Bulgarian tribute, the revenues of Cyprus and Eastern Roumelia, part of the duty levied upon Persian tobacco, any excess that might be received from new customs duties and from new licence or patent fees. They further stipulated for the receipt of any sums in payment of debt by Servia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, or Greece. They also asked for the establishment of a council of administration resident at

Constantinople, consisting of delegates selected by the bond-holders, invested with the fullest power of collection, and with the entire control of the provincial and central offices employed in carrying on "the service of the Ottoman Public Debt." All these demands were conceded by the Sultan, and formulated as laws of the State in an Imperial decree on December 20th, 1881.<sup>7</sup>

These great changes came into operation with the year 1882, and the members of the Commission began to have some faint glimmerings of the nature of the difficulties against which a reforming and honest ruler of Turkey had had to struggle. As one slight instance of these difficulties, I may mention the case of the tobacco duty. This had to be collected from eighteen districts extending all over the Empire in Europe and Asia. At the head of each district was a chief agent, who employed under

<sup>7</sup> That the terms of this decree were loyally observed was recognized in a report of the Commission issued at the end of their first year's work.

him from two to three hundred subordinate officers, and these persons carried on their work with an entire absence of all effective control from Constantinople, and had often (especially in Asia Minor) to contend against smugglers who came armed and organized for resistance. Of course it is absurd to suppose that a commission of foreigners could make any headway at all against such a state of affairs as this, did they not receive the most material assistance from the native Government officials, and that they have received such assistance is owing almost entirely to the direct influence of the Sultan.

The total sum given up to this Commission was one million and three-quarters sterling,<sup>8</sup> and as the annual revenue of the entire Empire is only seventeen and a

<sup>8</sup> Of this sum the bondholders have to surrender £536,363 per annum, in payment of interest and part principal of a loan made by the Galata syndicate already mentioned, guaranteed by a lien on the indirect taxation. This debt will be extinguished in twenty-four years.

half millions sterling—exclusive of the revenues devoted to the payment of the public debt—the most prejudiced Turkophile will, I fancy, not refuse to acknowledge that Turkey has at least made honest efforts to pay the interest of loans from one-half of whose proceeds she has never received one iota of benefit.

Having seen now what has been the behaviour of the Sultan to his creditors, let us glance for a moment at how his debtors have in their turn treated him, and how the great Powers have kept their solemn engagements on matters financial.

By Article 9 of the Treaty of Berlin the amount of the annual tribute to be paid by Bulgaria was to be fixed by agreement of the Powers signing the Treaty. The exact text of the article is as follows :—

“At the close of the first year of the working of the new organization, the amount is to be reckoned on the mean revenue of the territory of the principality. . . . As Bulgaria is to bear a portion of the public



debt of the Empire, when the Powers shall fix the tribute they shall take into consideration what portion of that debt can, on the basis of a fair proportion, be assigned to the principality.”

Now, although nine years have passed away since the representatives of Europe set their signature to that article, not one single step has been taken towards enforcing the fulfilment of the provision. Yet in every one of these years the Turkish Government has handed over to its creditors, in lieu of the Bulgarian tribute, its receipts from one of its few remaining sources of revenue—the tobacco tithe! Can anything more clearly prove what sort of spirit it is in which the provisions of the Berlin Treaty have been administered by the men who signed it? Every pecuniary obligation imposed upon the Porte has been vigorously enforced, and, I may add, cheerfully complied with, while the one *favourable* to Turkey has been cynically disregarded. The *ability* of Bulgaria to

pay her debt has never been denied, for the simple reason that she has never been asked to do so. The Powers have never so much as raised the question by going through the form of fixing the amount, every reminder they have received from the Sultan's ministers having been entirely disregarded.

But this is by no means all, for in Article 33 we find :—

“As Montenegro is to bear her share of the Ottoman public debt, *for the additional territories given her by the Treaty of Peace*, the representatives of the Powers at Constantinople are to determine the amount of the same in concert with the Sublime Porte.”

Article 44 provided in the same way for a payment by Servia; but, although this latter State has lately found the means to wage an aggressive war, not one farthing from either principality has found its way into the Sultan's treasury. When my readers next see their daily paper calmour

aloud for a more stringent carrying out of the clauses referring to the future of Armenia, &c., I ask them to make a mental note of the above facts.

This plain and truthful statement of the difficulties with which the Sultan had to deal in managing the question of indirect taxation, will give the reader some idea of the sort of work which lay before him in restoring the balance of receipts and expenditure in the Imperial accounts, deprived as he was of the most fertile sources of revenue. It was a task which would have staggered the ablest Chancellor of the Exchequer that ever sat on the treasury bench of St. Stephen's; but, it was a task from which Abdul Hamid did not shrink. The first step was obviously to cut down expenditure to the lowest minimum, consistent with national security and administrative efficiency, and the next to put a speedy stop to the organized system of mismanagement and speculation, which was the slow and baleful growth of years.

For the doing of either of these things there was need of honest and capable men, for it was no mere question of issuing decrees. Next in importance to the men was a period of something like tranquillity in which they might work, for the bad habits of centuries are not to be eradicated in a few months. Yet from the return of the Plenipotentiaries up to now there has scarcely been a week in which the Government has not been distracted from the work of reform, either by real disturbances, the work of paid *agens provocateurs*, or by false rumours of disturbances, due to the fussiness of meddling and ill-informed consuls. Yet, in spite of these almost insurmountable obstacles and drawbacks, without a single hand from outside being raised to help, the work of reform has gone steadily, speedily, and unceasingly forward, and I am able to say here, and to prove a little later on, that no country in Europe has made such rapid progress in everything that constitutes what men call civi-

lization as has the Ottoman Empire under the firm and guiding hand of Abdul Hamid II.

So far I have been able to deal with events of recent Turkish history in, or very nearly in, their correct chronological order ; but in chronicling the various measures of public welfare initiated by the Sultan and carried out by ministers taking their orders directly from him, I shall abandon that method as being pedantic and confusing, and shall treat of each reform singly and as a distinct and separate whole.

First, let me say a word or two to remove some of the common misconceptions in regard to the relative position of Christian and Mussulman in Asia Minor ; because, while it is pretty generally recognized that in Europe the Christian is at any rate strong enough to take care of himself, it is believed that in Asia Minor he is in a miserable minority and much put upon by the Mohammedan tyrant. As a matter

of fact there are more Christians in high office in Asia Minor than there are Catholic nationalist magistrates in Ireland, and religion is less a bar to advancement under the rule of Sultan Abdul Hamid than under that of Queen Victoria. The administration of province after province of Asia Minor is in the hands of Christians, and much of the trouble is not unfrequently due to the intolerance and bigotry of these provincial governors. Your Asiatic Christian, like his European brother, only accepts that part of his Master's teaching which happens to fit in with his own interests. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's" is a maxim he most steadfastly ignores, and two-thirds of the complaints and appeals made to European Christians are—translated into plain English—merely the expression of the Asiatic Christian's objection to pay taxes which are uncomplainingly paid by the Turk. I have said that I would prove every statement I made, and I here call the reader's atten-

tion to two little facts which ought, with every fair-minded man or woman to go far to neutralize the sensational reports coming to Europe Russiawards. At the Easter festival last year, Mgr. Azarian, Patriarch of the Catholic Armenians (the people who it is well known are "trodden under the Pasha's hoof"), celebrated High Mass in the cathedral of Sakiz Oghatch, and it was attended by all the leading members of the community. In the sermon which closed the ceremony, the Patriarch laid great stress on the many religious privileges accorded to Catholic Armenians by the Sultan, to whom, he said, all his hearers should ever feel deeply grateful. Prayer was offered for the preservation of his Majesty's life, and the Patriarch ended by three times exclaiming, "Long live our beloved sovereign, Abdul Hamid." <sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Some idea of the confidence which the Armenian Christians place in the Sultan's toleration may be formed from the following circumstance. In Novem-



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Last year the Maronite Archbishop of Beyrouth, Mgr. Joseph Debs, paid a visit to Rome and had an interview with his Holiness Leo XIII. At this interview he informed the Pope of the great religious liberty allowed by the Sultan to all members of the Maronite faith, and on his way home, while at Constantinople, he took occasion to express to the Sultan the sentiments of fidelity and devotion with which the entire Maronite congregation had charged him.

Of course this is not exactly the sort of Turkish news which "our own correspondent" is in the habit of transmitting to his chiefs at home; but it is true, nevertheless, and when one hears similar statements of the heads of the unorthodox faiths

ber last, a quarrel broke out in the Armenian community, partly upon a question of heritage and partly upon a question of religious privileges. It was purely a family feud; but it was submitted by the Armenians to the arbitration of the Minister of Public Worship, and the Porte promptly appointed a commission to give judgment upon the points in dispute.

in Russia, one will be inclined to believe a little more strongly in the sincerity of the Czar's solicitude for religious toleration.

One of the greatest curses of the Turkish Empire during the reign of Abdul Hamid's predecessors was that of brigandage—and, although that peculiar and fascinating method of getting a living has never been confined to the Sultan's dominions,—“redeemed Italy” and “free Greece” being not altogether free from it—yet it may be admitted that in Asia Minor it had reached proportions unknown in any other part of the civilized world. To such a height of perfection and efficiency had it there attained, that there was perhaps more excuse than usual for the hasty correspondent's jumping to the conclusion that the brigands either largely bribed the local Mohammedan authorities or were even positively in their employ. But, alas! for the pretty fiction, the Sultan has taken the brigands very seriously in hand. There

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has been a considerable fluttering in the dovecots of the Dijarbekar, and amongst other interesting facts which have been brought to light is the one that the principal marauders—the most turbulent, worthless, and violent of the disturbers of the peace—are a choice little army, numbering many thousands, of emigrants from the Caucasus, who had been driven thence by the benevolent Government of Russia! The able administrators of the Czar, finding themselves unable to do anything with a people who were too lazy to work and too numerous to be hanged (*à la* Nihilist”), adopted the time-honoured policy of shooting their rubbish into their neighbour’s garden. By these exiles and by the Kurds, a great part of Asia Minor has been kept in a high fever of brigandage. Bands of armed men, led by their chiefs, levied practical war on the peaceful subjects of the Sultan, and when tired of active robbery and yearning for the pleasures of a quiet life, quartered them-

selves on the agriculturists, Armenian and Mohammedan alike (for your brigand has no theological prejudices), and compelled these folk to support them and their horses for months at a time.

Such was the state of things to which the Sultan found himself called upon to apply a remedy. It was of little use looking for helpful suggestion to his European advisers. Their one idea was the immediate dismissal of all the wicked Mohammedan governors, who had been for generations persecuting and plundering the helpless Christians. But, happily for his subjects, Abdul Hamid had not been long on the throne before he discovered facts which had escaped the notice of the European Powers, aided as they were by their well-remunerated consuls, and his instructions for the suppression of brigandage are recognized by the whole press of the Empire, Christian and Turk, and by every one in any way acquainted with the facts, as being perfectly adapted to attain

the end in view. The Sultan has not shirked the possibility that judges and magistrates in Turkey as in London may occasionally be guilty of illegal acts, and as a beginning, all *valis* and *mutrosarifs* are ordered to exercise a strict and constant surveillance over the tribunals in their respective governments, and to report to the Minister of Justice any *lache* and irregularity which may come, or be brought, under their notice. The thorough execution of this order, though no doubt it will bring many scandals to light, and send some corrupt officials to condign punishment, will do more to stop the remunerative gains of the *agent provocateur* than any number of shifting reforms. How some of our own English agricultural labourers must long for a similar surveillance over the "great unpaid." Indeed, as a well-informed Eastern journal remarks,<sup>10</sup> "the spectacle of un-

<sup>10</sup> *Levant Herald*, November 2nd, 1887.

righteous cadis disgraced, and their local patrons reduced to utter powerlessness, will afford grim satisfaction."

Another practical measure is the drawing of police and *gens d'armes* from the districts they will be called upon to protect; for robber-hunting in a wild country and among hills and dales can only be successfully undertaken when the huntsmen have as intimate a topographical knowledge of the country as the quarry. For this reason the Bashi-bazooks have always proved themselves better able to cope with brigandage than regular troops. They speak the language of the district, and being amongst friends and relatives, are able to possess themselves of information which prevents their falling into ambushes which would be fatal to men coming from a distance. This winter the work of exterminating the brigands has gone merrily on. Driven down by the cold from their mountain fastnesses, they have been compelled to hide in the

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villages and small towns in which they have been accustomed to lounge and swagger as masters in their idle season ; and once there, they are soon delivered up to justice by the peasants they have robbed and maltreated. A few more months of the sort of work that has been going on this winter will render Asia Minor as safe to the European tourist as the Highlands of Scotland—and much less expensive.

Here I may as well say what I have to say on the subject of that humorous institution—the foreign consul. Consuls are ostensibly appointed for the purpose of protecting the interests of the subjects whose country they represent ; but, in Turkey, it not unfrequently happens that the consul is not only not the fellow-countryman of his *protégés*, but that he cannot even speak their language.

On one occasion I wanted some information concerning a commercial transaction, and on applying to the English consul



was met with the rather surprising remark, "I wish I could-a speak-a Henglish." His inability to do so, I may mention, put me to considerable expense.

On another day I was talking to the Turkish governor of an island, and the conversation turned upon a certain European consul, whose nationality shall be nameless, who had made himself conspicuous by his want of good manners. "That man," said the governor, "represents in his consular capacity a country in which he has never set foot, of whose language he cannot speak a word, and of which only one native resides in this island. The latter is an honourable man, who, I am sure, has never spoken to his consul."

"But surely this consul's Government knows something of him?"

"Nothing whatsoever. The appointment of vice-consul which he holds is a kind of perquisite belonging to the consul-general of the district. The consul being appointed either by merit or by favour, it

only remains to procure the *exequatur* of the Porte, which is often a question of patronage, and the *exequatur* once obtained the consul is at once installed and may enter upon the exercise of his functions."

"Your Excellence does not seem to have a very high opinion of this consul."

"Not very. I know that his house is a refuge for brigands—all the servant-men in his employ are brigands; in fact, I take him to be the most dangerous brigand in the island. I have always a lot of police and soldiers on his track observing his movements."

"But if his Government knew all this, would they not dismiss him?"

"I don't know. The appointment of consuls and still more of vice-consuls is all a matter of favour, often determined by the whim of a woman. These men often carry on a kind of civil warfare against the local authorities, and impede the progress of business as much as though they were foreign foes."

"But surely the Sublime Porte has a voice in the matter?"

"Scarcely at all. When a consul or vice-consul is appointed, the Sublime Porte grants an *exequatur* as a matter of course. To do otherwise would expose it to a charge of infringing the convention regarding consular courts and appointments. In fact, the Ottoman Government is hampered in matters of domestic legislation in a way that no other Government would submit to. Take the case of the consul of whom we have just been speaking. On the police-books at the present moment there are thirty-four charges against that man all involving breaches of the public peace; but I cannot bring him to justice because, forsooth, he is a vice-consul. He is protected by a Government of which he is not a subject, and of which only one native is resident in this island, and yet this man, thus protected, sets the local Government at defiance, harbours brigands in his house, employs their services to attain any special

end he may have in view, either to attack a personal enemy or to seize a fancy animal, such as a sheep or goat of valuable breed. Sheltered under his consular flag this man openly protects brigands, and as openly defies my authority as governor. If you wish, I will send you a copy of the thirty-four charges now tending against your worthy vice-consul."

My friend was as good as his word, and the next day I received a copy of the charges inscribed on the police-books against the vice-consul. What a list ! Dogs shot in the market-place, because they had dared to bark at one of his favourite hounds ; dynamite used in fishing, and used in such quantities that, not small craft only, but the governor's flag-ship trembled as from an earthquake. A respectable father of a family, returning home one evening with his four small children, struck a dog belonging to this terrible personage, which had flown at his little son ; for this crime the Consul had fallen upon and so severely belaboured

him about the head, that years after, when I heard the story, he was still deaf from the injuries.

With the following good story which I had from an eye-witness of the scene, I will conclude the unsavoury subject of the foreign consulate. When Ismail Pasha was making a tour through the *Ægean* he one day arrived at the Island of Cos. On the morning after his arrival the English Consul paid his official visit. The Pasha, through the medium of an interpreter, entered into conversation with him, and asked many pertinent questions, for Ismail was a shrewd person, always anxious to gather information concerning the localities through which he journeyed. Sweets and coffee having been served, our honoured representative made the usual salutation and retired. After a lapse of half an hour, the French Vice-Consul was announced, in correct uniform, and met with a reception as polite as had been accorded to his English confrère. The Pasha talked

with him in the same way as he had done with his previous visitor, but after a few minutes he suddenly stopped short, and looking sharply at the Consul, said,—

“ I think I have seen your face before ; but I cannot remember where.”

“ Yes, Excellence, I have had the honour of an interview with your Excellence this morning in my capacity of English Consul.”

“ Oh, you are English as well as French representative ? ”

“ Yes, Excellence, that is so.”

“ How many other powers do you represent ? ”

“ Five more. In all I hold seven consulates,” and the highly-consulated gentleman enumerated the kingdoms represented.

“ You have already visited me in your capacity of French and English Consul. Do you intend to go through the like ceremony on behalf of all the states you represent ? ”

“ Excellence, I should deem it my duty to do so ! ”

To which Ismail smilingly replied that he had been so charmed by the consul's interesting conversation as representative of the two great Powers that he felt that he could not exact his attendance in his five other capacities. When Ismail took his drive that evening, he was amused at seeing seven national flags floating over the residence of the super-conscientious consul.

The intense anxiety of the Porte to comply with all the just claims of foreign Powers and to give no possible cause of offence often results in hardship to its own subjects. An instance of such hardship came under my notice a short while ago. The right of fishing off the coast of the Island of Mitylene is rented by the local Greek fishermen for a sum averaging 2000*l.* per annum. Some time ago, some Italian fishermen came poaching on their preserves, and not unnaturally a quarrel ensued. The quarrel ended, as such quarrels usually do, in hard knocks, and the Italians got the worst of it ; whereupon they



complained to their consul of what they called their "unjustifiable" treatment. This gentleman took up the cause of his compatriots with so much warmth that the Greeks, who had merely fought for a right for which they had already paid, were thrown into prison, whence they were only released after six months, by the influence of a lady who knew all the circumstances, and who, after immense trouble and delay, managed to bring the facts to the notice of the Imperial Government. Meanwhile, the Turkish governor of the island had been suspended from his functions, and the gentlemen who had interested themselves on behalf of the Greeks had been imprisoned. As soon as the truth became known at Constantinople (and it is difficult to get the truth known there, for it is nearly always to some one's interest to suppress it), the governor was reinstated, the prisoners liberated, the Italian consul-general of Smyrna dismissed, and Count Corte, the Italian ambassador

at Constantinople, whose conduct had been, to say the least of it, the reverse of judicious, was reprimanded. It also came out that the vice-consul, who was the first cause of all the hardship and injustice, had no official *exequatur* at all, having been only a sort of *locum tenens* of the real official, who happened to have been absent at the time.

These little facts, for the truth of all of which I can personally vouch, should do something to make it clear to my countrymen that before the Western Powers wax so vehement in urging reforms on the Government of Turkey, and display so much anxiety about the mote in the Sultan's eye, they should make some effort to remove the consular beam from their own.

It is almost a commonplace of social philosophy that the measure of a nation's civilization may be taken by noting the condition of its women, and the status of woman in South Eastern Europe is often pointed to as indicating the very low water

mark which civilization has reached under the rule of the Turk. Taking a broad view of what it is the fashion now-a-days to call the "woman question" (though I have never been able quite to gather what the "question" is, which we women are supposed to be so clamorously asking), I must confess that I should have to think once, twice, and thrice before I could decide whether to give the preference to the life of a woman under the rule of Abdul Hamid, or under that of our own gracious sovereign. On one point I am quite clear, that, if woman's life in Western Europe is so greatly superior to her existence under the Mohammedan régime, it is only among the higher-middle and upper classes that that superiority is at all manifest. A very little study of the condition of our own working classes will convince the most prejudiced Christian that the economic slavery under which our poorer women-folk suffer and toil is every whit as galling and as hard to bear as anything endured by the

wives and daughters of the "unspeakable Turk."<sup>12</sup> The kind of "freedom" enjoyed by the factory hand, the washerwoman, and the sempstress is, happily for themselves, unknown to their sisters in the East, and I have no hesitation in saying that the longer it is unknown to them the better for them will it be. The "dignity" of the wife of a man earning a precarious living of less than a pound a week, with the children to feed and clothe upon it, is the sort of dignity to which I earnestly hope the Turkish woman may long be a stranger. But while the difference between the condition of the poor in Christian and Mohammedan lands (and in both cases the "poor" are the immense majority of the population) is a difference altogether in favour of the latter, it would of course be idle to deny that the European lady of "Society" does enjoy advantages of position and education

<sup>12</sup> The stipulations of the Married Woman's Property Act have long been the law in Turkey. A Turkish lady's fortune remains her own after marriage.

superior to those of the consorts of the men of the upper classes in Turkey. How long the former will be able to boast their advantages it is difficult to say, probably for some generations yet, for the Turkish sister has much lee-way to make up ; but the good work has been undertaken by the resolute hand of Abdul Hamid, and the progress of female education made under his reign is little short of the marvellous.

Not so many years ago it was next to impossible to meet a Turkish lady who could read a book, or take a part in anything like a rational conversation. I well remember, when I first visited the East, so short a time as nine years ago, the immense astonishment of my fair Turkish friends, when they found me with a book in my hands and actually reading it—and the sort of gossip and idle chatter which one used to overhear among the “beauties of the harem” were not such as to give one a very exalted notion of their know-

ledge or capacity. But now as I go to and fro on the Bosphorus steamers I hear the Turkish ladies (the women who the average Englishman believes are never allowed to come from behind the seraglio curtain) discussing current literature, questions of the hour, and altogether talking like rational human beings.

But not to deal any longer in discursive generalities, let me give a few facts which have come under my immediate notice, and which will throw a strong clear light on the progress of female education in Turkey; for be it noted that education, and education alone, is the weapon with which the Turkish woman must fight her way to freedom. So long as a sex or class is ignorant, it must remain degraded. Give it the requisite knowledge, and it is its own fault if it does not rise to any position it may covet. It says much for the political instinct of the Sultan that he recognizes this truth of which so many of our social reformers lose sight, and that,

thus recognizing it, he has attacked the "woman question" from the *inside*, and not sought to alter external circumstance with a disregard to internal conditions. A Turkish woman, uninstructed and ignorant of life, suddenly brought into the pure atmosphere breathed by her Western sister, would be a fish out of water, and would suffer all the miseries of that ill-placed being. Before she can be admitted to Western freedom she must be brought into the mental condition in which alone that freedom can be anything but painful and humiliating. How the process of fitting her for the new conditions is being carried on let the following facts tell.

In the early days of the year 1885 I paid a visit to the Sanié Turkish school for girls. It is a splendid institution, subsidized by the Imperial Government, and placed under the special protection of the Sultan. To enter it one passes through a postern door above which are emblazoned the royal arms of Turkey.



I was conducted by a janitor through the principal entrance into a spacious hall. On my right was a noble staircase forming almost a semicircle. I mounted these stairs, crossed a hall, and entered a handsome, well-carpeted room, down the middle of which ran a long table at which were sitting, or to speak more correctly, standing, to receive visitors, about thirty young girls. On the table was a quantity of plain work on which these youthful sempstresses were engaged. The work consisted of garments for themselves, and I could not help wishing that a similar sight more often awaited the visit of the school-board inspector in England. I was admiring the luxurious room and its appointments, when I was informed by one of the lady teachers, that the whole building was formerly the Konak or palace of Tonoglaw Mohammed Pasha, and had been given by the Government as a school for Turkish girls. Somehow or other at that moment I could not help

thinking of our own Northumberland House and of the very fine hotel which now occupies its site.

Six lady teachers four of whom spoke French, were ready to give me all the information I asked. The directress of the establishment, Mademoiselle Calavass, now came upon the scene, and conducted me through the various classrooms and dormitories. The view that met my eyes from the windows of these rooms was simply enchanting. There lay before me the bay of Constantinople, and the breeze that entered these windows swept over the Golden Horn. The benighted Turkish architect had evidently managed to deal quite satisfactorily with that vexed question of ventilation which so successfully baffles the well-meant efforts of the constructors of our board schools in England. The pupils are 320 in number, of whom 100 are resident ; all have their meals in the school at the expense of the foundation. The dormitories are

spacious, well-ventilated rooms, each child has a small iron bedstead whose sheets and coverlets are spotlessly clean, and no boarding school in England need blush to show the casual visitor such dormitories as those of the Sanié School. As to the course of instruction, the curriculum embraces the Turkish language, reading, writing, arithmetic, music (the piano), singing, and plain and fancy work. I said I should like to test the progress of the pupils. The teacher joyfully consented. Eight young girls, varying in age from nine to fourteen, knelt on the carpet, and sitting on their heels, began to sing from written notes held in the hand, and kept accurate time and tune. Personally I can't say that I care for Turkish music, which strikes a Western ear as being above a trifle monotonous, but these children had evidently been well taught, and sang from note, not by ear. Their performance on the piano was also extremely creditable.

The examinations, however, which gave

me the greatest pleasure, were those of drawing and fancy work. The skill and æsthetic feeling shown in these two departments were really marvellous. Surprised I certainly was, but my surprise rose to wonderment when I learned that the Sanié School had only been in existence a year, and that previous to that time not one of the pupils whose performances I had just witnessed had known anything of the arts in which they had made such remarkable progress. The teaching staff consists of six female resident, and four male visiting, teachers. The masters teach singing, music, drawing and writing, and the mistresses undertake the other branches. The pupils are all of the upper or upper-middle classes, they dress neatly but very plainly, wearing either cotton or woollen frocks. The expenses of the school are about £180 a month, which includes the salaries of teachers and wages of servants. This sum is paid by the Government under the patronage of

the Sultan, by whom the establishment was initiated.

Since that visit I have been present at a distribution of prizes at the girls' school of Emirghian, and was equally struck at the great progress made in a few years. The audience was composed of Turkish ladies, who manifested the greatest possible interest in the proceedings. The prizes consisted of books and diplomas, and it was pleasant to notice the gratification of the head mistress, Finet Hanoum, as her pupils stepped up to receive the guerdon of their own labours and the results of the pains she had bestowed upon them.

For the reasons given above, viz. that it is an index to a nation's civilization, I have made special mention of female education. Where one finds that the instruction of girls is looked after, one may be always quite sure that that of young people of the other sex is not neglected ; and Turkey is no exception to this rule. Here is a list of schools now existing in Constanti-

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nople, all of which have been founded by the present Sultan :—

L'école civile Impériale.

School preparatory to the above.

L'école de Droit.

L'école de Commerce.

L'école des Arts et Métiers (similar to our technical college at South Kensington).

Pensionnat des Arts et Métiers. (This is a technical school for *girls*.)

Externat des Arts et Métiers (Also for *girls*.)

There are also schools for the study of the fine arts, a veterinary college, a school of languages, schools of medicine, civil and military, and some other civil schools founded by the unfortunate Abdul Aziz. In the capital there are no less than twenty secondary schools, and in the provinces the number of secondary schools founded by Abdul Hamid amounts to more than a hundred, as do also the primary schools which owe their origin to the same source.

Schools in which pupils are prepared for the superior colleges and faculties have also been established by the Sultan in Smyrna, Magnesia, Monastir, Janina, Broussa, Karassa, Aadana, Castamouni, Adrianople, Trebizonde, Ismid, Danas, Grunuldjene, Gallipoli, Salonica, and Kharpout.

In the following places there are preparatory schools, after studying in which the pupils are removed to the "normal" schools in the capital:—Adrianople, Salonica, Cassova, Scutari, Albania, Monastir, Smyrna, Broussa, Diarbekir, Kharpout, Sivas, Konia, Locad, Erzeroum, Castamouni, Mossoul, Amassa, Luli, Vau, Bittis, and Angora.

Other schools are now either being built, or in course of building, at Aidin, Tripoli, Rhodes, Kutahva, Erzeroum, Angora, Yozgod, Cesarea, Kir-Chekir, Aleppo, Sivas, Serfitcha, Bigha, and Jerusalem.

I should have to write several books in



order to do full justice to the efforts of the Sultan on behalf of national education, or to give any adequate idea of his ceaseless activity in that great cause. Scarcely a day passes without some evidence being given of his generosity and solicitude. Quite recently he made a spontaneous gift of 250,000 piastres in aid of the preparatory schools in the island of Crete, and, for it, at once received addresses from the various towns, expressing the profound gratitude of the people. These and similar facts are always duly chronicled in the journals, Turkish and foreign, published in Constantinople, but no special correspondent takes the trouble to extract them and send them to his employers in England. Thus the English people are still under the impression that everything in Turkey is as it was a century and a half ago.

Of course, I do not pretend that there is not very much more to be done before the educational system of Turkey is brought into line with that of some of her neighbours; but

I maintain that the few facts given above are enough to demonstrate that the cause of national enlightenment has made greater actual progress in the dominions of the Sultan during the last two years than in any other part of the globe. And one must further remember that what has been done, has been done in spite of obstacles and difficulties such as no other government is called upon to encounter—obstacles and difficulties which have been largely the creation of the servants and emissaries of that sovereign in whose realm education has actually gone back during the eight years of his rule.<sup>13</sup>

Mention has been made above of certain gifts of the Sultan to the educational establishments of Turkey. These donations, unlike those of most sovereigns, are made by him at a real sacrifice to himself. Not once or twice Abdul Hamid has made munificent presents out of his very modest

<sup>13</sup> See the writings of Stepniak Tikhomiroff and Prince Krapotkin on the social condition of Russia.

civil list. On one occasion he converted the greater portion of his plate and jewellery into cash for the use of the State Treasury; at another he cut down the number of his personal servants in order to devote the funds to the service of deserving charities; and at the present moment no monarch in Europe is living in less luxury or ostentation, or at a less cost to his subjects. And this is the more creditable, inasmuch as a considerable portion of the Sultan's income must be looked upon as what professors of political economy would call "wages of superintendence;" for whereas other sovereigns are either mere State ornaments, or lay figures which move at the pulling of the strings by some able and powerful minister, Abdul Hamid is the active and motive reforming force of his empire, and his ministers are merely the subordinate officers who carry out his behests and directions.

When treating of the subject of education, I find that I forgot to mention a new depar-

ture which has recently been taken in the direction of establishing much-needed schools of agriculture. I say much needed, for of all the soils of Europe, there is not one which is capable of yielding more, and none which in relation to its powers (owing to the obsolete methods of cultivation in vogue) yields less than that of Turkey. An initiatory step was taken some quarter of a century ago by the establishment of a model farm at San Stefano. At the time of its establishment it was provided with all the then latest improvements, accessories, and agricultural implements for farming purposes, and was placed under the charge of a specialist named Boghos Bey Dadian. For some years it produced excellent results, but somehow or other it was neglected and abandoned, and both money and trouble were practically thrown away. During the present reign, however, it occurred to Agop Pasha, Minister of the Civil List, that this farm might be resuscitated and put on a footing with

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similar institutions in Europe. The consent of the Sultan was at once and readily obtained, and now this re-established farm is in full working order and forms the nucleus of a school of agriculture which will soon have ramifications in every part of the empire. The pupils who obtain diplomas at the end of their term of study will be sent by the Ministers of the Civil List to the various provinces to administer the farms which belong to the Crown, and thus all the farms of the interior will be provided with efficient directors.

One of the first subjects which engaged the attention of the Sultan after the withdrawal of the hostile armies across the frontier was that of the improvement of the means of communication between the various parts of his vast empire. Before the advent of the era of railway enterprise the condition of Turkey in this respect was neither much worse nor much better than that of any other country in Europe. Roads everywhere, with few exceptions, were more

of hindrance than of help to the traveller, and roads in Turkey did not differ very greatly from those in Austria or Russia. But when English capital and English labour crossed the Straits of Dover and, flowing all over Christian Europe, left in their wake the line along which the "iron horse" was soon to rush in headlong speed, dragging behind him vast masses of merchandise and thousands of men, Turkey at once dropped miles behind her European competitors in the struggle for commercial supremacy, and in this heavily handicapped position she remained until her present ruler took in his hands the reins of government. To make any progress at all in the direction of railroad construction was a task of stupendous difficulty. Devastated by war, depleted by famine, rendered well-nigh bankrupt by speculation and mal-administration, the country was scarcely in a position to find the funds for laying down an ordinary gravel path. Nothing but foreign capital could set to work the

armies of navvies and coach-builders, whose brawny arms must needs go a-swinging before a foot of iron could be laid or a cog-wheel forged, and foreign capital, always timid and bashful, had been effectually frightened by the cessation of the payment of the coupons under the management of the ministers of Abdul Aziz. But, in spite of these almost insuperable obstacles, some progress has been made, as the following figures will show. In 1878 there were 958 miles of rail in the empire, being 786 miles in Turkey in Europe, and 172 miles in Asia Minor. In 1883 these had grown to 1070 miles, and in 1886 they had again increased to 1251 miles, of which 347 miles were in Asia, constituting four lines—one from Smyrna to Aidin, one from Scutari to Ismid, one from Messina to Tarsus and Adana, and one from Janina to Brod.

It is naturally to this last-mentioned part of the empire that we must look for most progress in the future, for it is here that



the Sultan most earnestly desires that the means of communication should be improved, and its vast, immeasurable resources developed. It is to this quarter of the globe that it would be well worth the while of the capitalist to cast his eye at a time when the rate of interest is rapidly falling; when enormous sums are "going begging" in the European Bourses, and people are jumping at a return of three and a half and four per cent.

Of course, in Turkey in Europe the difficulties in the way of railway construction are more than those merely of the pocket. They are political as well as financial. Englishmen, secure behind their tempest-tossed twenty miles of ocean, are apt to forget that on the Continent, before a line can be laid, the plans of "princes and statesmen" have to be taken into account as well as those of money-lords and railway engineers; and that those who are responsible for the safety of empires have to consider what other things (in the way of

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armed men and munitions of war) besides merchandise, tourists, and *commis voyageurs* the proposed line may possibly convey. In no part of the civilized world are such questions of more importance than in Turkey in Europe. Here a line which might be of immense commercial value to the Turk might also be of great strategic assistance to the Russian, and the latter consideration may very reasonably quite outweigh the former. But in Asia Minor no such questions can possibly arise. There is positively nothing to prevent the opening up of these rich and fertile provinces but lack of knowledge and enterprise on the part of American and European capitalists. Did one not know that the "monied man" keeps his patriotism in his pocket, one would be surprised that no English company has yet been formed for running a line from the Western Coast of Asia Minor, say from a point opposite Cyprus, to the Persian Gulf. From such a line England as a nation would gain politi-

cally as much as the shareholders would gain financially. No doubt some concessions of a political sort would be required from the Sultan, but his well-known and constantly-manifested anxiety to do all in his power to stimulate enterprise in these regions makes the granting of any reasonable concessions a foregone conclusion. Had we a Government with eyes that could see beyond Trafalgar Square, or an Opposition who could envisage aught besides Ireland, neither England nor Turkey would have to wait long for such an undertaking to be begun under a national guarantee of a minimum dividend. Some time ago I noticed in the semi-official organ of the Czar in London, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, an unworthy sneer at the Sultan for having sought an interview with a great American Croesus whose yacht was anchored in the Bay of Constantinople! Did not one know that the eccentric and hysterical editor of that journal had had his rather weak head completely turned by the fascinations and

flatteries of a fair Muscovite diplomatist, it would be scarcely credible that the efforts of a sovereign to benefit his people should be used against him as a reproach, even by a London editor.

Should Christian or Hebrew capital ever find its way into Asia Minor, recent events have made it pretty clear that Abdul Hamid will have to be well on his guard, lest *all* the benefits of the undertaking should flow into the strong boxes of the promoters and shareholders. But the Sultan has learned from bitter experience that his country is looked upon as fair game by the sportsman-boursier, and his subjects may rely on it that no concessions will be granted which do not secure to the Ottoman Empire a fair share of the certain advantages and gains. The events to which I refer have reference to a railway which was to have been constructed under the financial auspices of Messrs. Erlanger, Alt, and Seefeldter. The terms insisted upon by the Sultan as a

necessary set off to the large concessions were, 1st. That the Concessionaries must begin the works simultaneously at Ismid and Angora, pushing them on from the latter place to Bagdad. 2nd. That the Government should have the right to purchase the line thirty years after the granting of the concession, and not thirty years after the opening of the railway. 3rd. That the purchase should be effected by the payment of an annual sum equal to fifty per cent. of the mean *gross* receipts of the five years preceding the purchase.

These terms, surely more reasonable than any other modern government would offer as the price of granting a monopoly, have not been accepted by Mr. Erlanger, and at the moment the matter remains in abeyance. But I should like to point out that Stipulation No. 2 affords an example of the exercise of that political instinct on the part of the Sultan to which I have more than once drawn attention. Had some similar stipulation been made by the

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English Government when granting the monopolies to our own great lines of railway, the English public would not now be suffering under the tyranny of such persons as Sir Edward - Watkin. The French Government were wiser in their generation, and before very many years are over their heads the French people will be the owners of their own railway system. Railroads are the highways of modern life, and it is monstrous that any private persons should hold a perpetual monopoly in the means of communication. The very utmost that capitalists have a right to demand is the return of the capital advanced, together with a fair remuneration for the risks incurred, and in refusing to permit the labour of his people to be subject to a perpetual charge for the benefit of foreign money-lenders, the Sultan has proved himself to be alive to the workings of the spirit of modern Socialism which is every day more and more inspiring the actions of politicians and the aspirations of peoples.

But railways, though the most important, are not the only means of communication which have received the attention of the Ottoman Government. In the recollection of the present writer, the ordinary roads in Asia Minor and some of the islands were at certain seasons of the year practically impassable. Now they are as good for man and beast as anything to be found in Europe. Many of them are macadamized with marble, and can be travelled on with comfort in the most rainy weather. Concerning our own Northern highways, there used to be an old jingle which said,—

“If you had seen these roads before they were made,  
You would take off your hat and bless General  
Wade.”

Could this couplet be translated into Turkish, and the name of the living Sultan be inserted in place of that of the dead general, it would admirably express the sentiments of the inhabitant and tourist of



the country where these new and excellent highways have been constructed.

The one department of the State in which it has been almost impossible to reduce the expenditure is that of the war-like forces of the empire. Menaced as she is by one bitter, hereditary and remorseless foe, and unable as she is to count upon the assistance of a single ally, the sovereign who would do anything to weaken her power of resistance to aggression would be a traitor of the blackest hue. But even here the reforming hand of the Sultan has managed in some small measure to contract expenditure without sacrificing efficiency. The introduction of the system of compulsory military service on the model of all the other Continental schemes has enabled the Ottoman Government to devote a considerable portion of the funds hitherto spent in paying volunteer troops, to improving the instruction of the officers and the equipment of the men of its army

and navy. A certain number of Turkish officers are now sent every year to Prussia for the purpose of studying the art of war, as practised by the most eminent of its professors. Batches of staff officers are annually sent on military tours throughout the Empire for the purpose of making themselves acquainted with the nature of the country, and becoming familiar with the points of greatest strategical importance. The intelligence department all over the world constantly transmits to Constantinople particulars of every military improvement and invention whose adoption might render more efficient their own military organization, and where possible such new ideas are rapidly put into practice. That most necessary of all things in modern war, a railway battalion, is now in process of creation, and those best qualified to speak tell me that, should a second "divine figure from the North" be moved to undertake another "knightly errand" of blood and fire, he will meet with a reception very

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different to that accorded to his predecessor in unprovoked aggression.

The Turkish navy has always been a thoroughly efficient arm of the State, and it was lack of opportunity only which forbade its rendering more distinguished service to the nation during the late war, but I am credibly informed from sources other than Turkish, that the fleet was never more powerful and ready for work than at the present moment, and that the recent addition of twenty-two first-class torpedo boats will enable its commanders to enter upon any possible naval war with every chance of renewing the ancient glories of the Ottoman navy.

The article of Sir Henry Eliot, late Ambassador at Constantinople, to which reference has already been made, substantially endorses all that I have said of the events which led up to Abdul Hamid's accession. But at that point Sir Henry's historic accuracy and his political insight seem to have failed him, and the

gist of his article is a wail over the fall of Midhat Pasha and his proposed constitution. He implicitly charges the Sultan with pursuing a retrograde and reactionary policy, inasmuch as in his (Sir Henry's) opinion, if the constitution had been allowed to "march," the progress of reformation in Turkey would have been much more rapid and much more satisfactory.

Now, neither of Midhat nor of his bantling do I intend to say any harsh or unkind things here. The former was undoubtedly an able and strenuous statesman, and of the latter we may say that it was about as good and about as bad as ready-made constitutions generally are.<sup>14</sup> History has

<sup>14</sup> The salient features of Midhat's proposals which were made public at the first meeting of the Conference of Constantinople, were the establishment of the Chambers—the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The Senate to be nominated by the Sultan, and chosen from amongst the most eminent personages in the country. The Chamber to consist of Deputies elected by ballot, and both bodies to exercise much the same functions as in a European Constitution. Islamism was declared to be the reli-

long ago proved the futility of the schemes of constitution-mongers, and sociology has taught us that a State is an organism which must evolve and grow, not an edifice which can be constructed or altered at the will or by the skill of any architect or builder. No doubt Midhat's well-meant scheme never had fair play, and for this Sir Henry Eliot's own Government was largely responsible, but a very slight sociological knowledge is all that is needed to convince one that the real reason of its inevitable failure was that the people on whom it was to be thrust had not reached that plane of political development on which alone constitutions of any kind are workable. Englishmen with their centuries

gion of the State, but all other forms of faith were guaranteed free exercise of public worship. Liberty of the Press and liberty of education were granted. *Primary education was made compulsory.* All persons were declared eligible for public offices without regard to differences of religion. Property was guaranteed, the domicil declared inviolable. Public officials were not to be dismissed without legitimate grounds.

of practical self-government, with their historic traditions of struggle and fight between monarch and people, with their jealousy of officialism, with their corporations, County Councils, vestries, ballot-boxes, Corrupt Practices' Acts and what not, are too apt to consider constitutional government as having been given at Sinai, and regard as knaves all sovereigns who do not grant, and as fools all people who do not demand, it. Our average fellow-countryman, "the man with a white hat, who rides on an omnibus" forgets that forms of government are only means to an end, and that the same means which with one race or people may most readily attain that end, with another may lead to a quite different result. A measure which in London or New York might act as a check on corruption, would only increase and intensify it in Constantinople or Bagdad.

Therefore it seems to me, an Englishwoman with no slight love of liberty and no great liking for despotism in the abstract

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that those who charge Abdul Hamid with having crushed the dawning freedom of his country, and with pursuing a policy of reaction and obscurantism, are guilty either of gross dishonesty, or of a strange lack of political capacity and sociological knowledge. It is a mark of his superiority to these political pedants in both these respects, that the Sultan was able to see through forms to facts, through shams to realities ; to disregard well-meant innovations and to continue in his own person the form of government best suited to the tastes and wants of the people for whose welfare and happiness it had pleased God to make him responsible.

It was said long ago by a distinguished oriental, who is generally supposed to have been endowed with a fair share of this world's wisdom, that in a multitude of counsellors there is confusion. From such confusion and its terrible results Abdul Hamid has saved his people, and I most fearlessly appeal to every one who has lived



in Turkey, who knows and can enter into the aspirations and ideas of its inhabitants, to say whether in their opinion had its destinies been confided to a brand new parliament, it is likely that I should have been able to chronicle the long list of reforms which I have set out above, and which are only a part of a large number of beneficent measures initiated and either already carried out or being carried out by the present head of the Ottoman Empire.

I do not deny, nay, I most firmly believe, that the day will come when Turkey will be a self-governing nation, but that day would have been postponed rather than hastened by the sham self-government of Midhat's scheme, and the course most likely to speed its advent is that now being taken by the Sultan and his ministers. An eye-witness of Abdul Hamid's conduct wrote at the end of the first month of his reign :—"In all matters of public importance, the personal views of the Sultan Hamid have exercised a most decisive influence, and this influence

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is growing every day ; but it is altogether of a different kind from that of his predecessors. It is not that capricious interference, the result of momentary whims and covert advice or influence, but it is a systematic effort on the Sultan's part to master the affairs of State by seeking for information and, on the strength of this, forming his judgment. The prejudice which seems to have existed in his mind in the beginning against the ministers who had been so active during the end of his predecessor's reign, has disappeared on nearer acquaintance, and the relations which have been established between him and them are of a novel kind. According to the etiquette of centuries, the Sultan came as little into contact with his ministers socially as with the rest of the world. The present Sultan has broken through the barriers of this isolation. He allows them to be seated in his presence, and discusses affairs in council. He has already spoken earnestly of his strong wish to encourage trade and industry,

to open agricultural schools, and to introduce model farms.<sup>15</sup> In his choice of officers to attend about his person he has specially selected those who have received a European education, and have become conversant not only with the languages, but with the leading ideas of the civilized countries of Europe."

If I needed any proof other than that given by *a priori* reasoning that the direct rule of such a man is better for such a population as that of Turkey than a régime of elective assemblies, I might find it in the condition of Bulgaria since the "autonomy" set up by the Treaty of Berlin. From that hour to this that unhappy province has been the hot-bed of intrigue and discontent. Every office open to the reach of ambition gives the *agent provocateur* a new field for his enterprise, and he sees in every new elector a possible subject for a bribe. It was a matter of common talk round the

<sup>15</sup> This wish has since been carried into effect ; vide *supra*, p 180-1.

camp-fires of the Russian troops during the recent war, that the condition of the peasants whom the Czar's soldiers had come to "liberate" was infinitely better than that of the fathers and brothers whom they themselves had left behind, and if this prosperous state of things no longer exists among the rustics of Bulgaria, and all evidence goes to prove that it is rapidly disappearing, they have nothing but their "rescuers" and their Assembly to thank for the change.

Not long ago a paragraph went the round of the English newspapers telling an anecdote of the King of Italy, for which that amiable monarch got much *kudos* amongst British democrats. It related how King Humbert, being shown over some public gardens, noticed the absence of his loyal subjects, and remarked how little his people seemed to avail themselves of the opportunities of enjoyment the place offered them. On being informed that the public had been excluded from the gardens during his inspection, he at once demanded their

re-admission, and the garden was almost immediately thronged with a grateful and loyal crowd. A similar incident in the life of Abdul Hamid received no such gratuitous publicity. Dining one day in the grounds of Yildiz Kiosk, his favourite residence, he noticed a large crowd assembled outside the gates, endeavouring to get a glimpse of the grounds. He at once ordered the gates to be thrown open and admission to be given to all the people who were gathered there, and from that time the public have obtained invariable admission to what had been heretofore forbidden ground. Similar acts on the part of certain more occidental royalties, who appear to think that the attitude of the "veiled prophet" is the one most consistent with their dignity, might do something to restore a rapidly waning popularity.

These pages are no place in which to raise the veil of that domestic privacy which is as dear to sovereign as to sweep, but I am only stating what is well known to every

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resident in Constantinople, when I say that the private life of the Sultan much more resembles that of an English gentleman than the popular idea of that of an Oriental prince. Amongst other financial reforms, he has consistently discouraged the expenditure of the harem.

The most painful duty and most terrible responsibility which are the lot of the absolute ruler are in coming to those decisions upon which hang the lives of his unfortunate and erring subjects. On every occasion on which the power of life and death has had to be wielded, Abdul Hamid has always settled the question by deciding for the claims of mercy and against the demands of inexorable justice, and he has not signed a single death-warrant since his accession.

The one thing now needful to give complete success to the Sultan's policy, and to render his rule an unmixed blessing to the millions of his vast empire, is a period of peace from European intermeddling and

from hostile intrigue. If England and her allies, having banished misery and discontent from the masses of their own people, having emptied their prisons and poor-houses, and filled their churches and workshops, desire an outlet for the superfluous energy of their philanthropists and political and social reformers, let them, in the name of all that is honest and human, turn their attention to that empire which stretches like a great black cloud from Archangel to the Black Sea. Let them proffer their "collective notes," their "remonstrances," their "jam and judicious advice" to the monarch from whose starving and tyrant-ridden millions one great wail of agony is ever ascending to the unanswering heavens. The "administrative exile" in the mines of Siberia, the political prisoner in the foul dungeons of the Troubetskoi bastion may well pray to be delivered from the rule of "the divine figure from the north," even if the terms of his release were a lifetime to be spent in the dominion of the unspeak-



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able Turk. But if from dishonesty and cowardice they shrink from interference with the cruelest and the most fraudulent and the blackest tyranny which has ever cursed the earth, at least let them have the decency to leave unmolested the sovereign who is presenting to his own subjects and to all who have eyes to see the spectacle longed for by our own illustrious poet, of—

“One still strong man in a brawling world.”

## CHAPTER IV.

## EGYPTIAN AFFAIRS.

IN dealing so far with the duties and responsibilities of the Sultan of Turkey, and with the manner in which the present holder of that title has performed and undertaken them, I have written as though those duties and responsibilities extended into only two continents. But although it may suit the purposes of Western diplomacy to act in disregard of the fact that the Sultan's rights extend across the waters of the Red Sea, and the Suez Canal, I should be giving a very inadequate account of the difficulties and doings of Abdul Hamid's reign were I to leave untouched the last ten years of the history of the Ottoman rule in Africa. The Sultan's task would have

been very considerably lightened had the condition of Egypt presented any very great contrast to that of the European and Asiatic provinces of the Empire. But the same state of things which prevailed in them, existed here also. Similar causes produce similar effects, and maladministration at the centre, neglect at the extremities and ceaseless foreign intrigue had brought about on the Nile the same state of hopeless political and social confusion with which Abdul Hamid had had to grapple on the Bosphorus and the Euphrates.

The misgovernment and extravagance of the Viceroy Ismail, to whom the European and Hebrew financiers had shown their usual kindness at the usual percentage, had at the time of the Sultan's accession culminated in a financial *impasse*. The army was clamouring for arrears of pay, and the wretched fellaheen were ground into the dust under a burden of taxation whose proceeds went to fill the pockets of Levantine adventurers and to deck the

persons of Parisian *Coryphées*. Directly the cessation of the death-struggle at the gates of his capital permitted him to turn his eyes southward, this state of affairs received Abdul Hamid's very prompt attention. He had not to look long or to make very many inquiries before perceiving that on the throne of Egypt Ismail Pasha was the wrong man in the wrong place.

It is one of the advantages of absolute government that under it the most exalted of subordinates can be relegated to private life by a stroke of the pen, and without matters having to be squared with the political party to whom the delinquent belongs. So it happened that one fine morning in August, 1879, the genial Ismail found himself ejected from the throne of the Pharaohs, and discovered that by an almost magical transformation his son Tewfic was reigning in his stead. Whether the change was a change for the better, from the point of view of the Egyptian fellah, may, by the light of subse-

quent events, be seriously and reasonably questioned. From a Carlylean stand-point the father was unquestionably fitter for rule than the son ; for whatever may have been Ismail's faults, he was undoubtedly a strong man, and whatever may be Tewfic's virtues, he is as unquestionably a weak one, and I am by no means sure that the unscrupulous oppression practised upon his subjects by the deposed viceroy in his single-hearted efforts to secure his own interests was not a burden easier to be borne than that laid upon the shoulders of the fellaheen by the feeble and *fainéant* policy of Tewfic. Had Abdul Hamid been given a free choice of a ruler for his tributary province, there is no reason to doubt that his selection of an administrator in Africa would have been any less successful than those he has made in Europe and Asia. But the Egyptian Khedivate is hereditary, and though the Suzerain may remove an individual, the breed must remain. Thus it was that the Sultan could do no more than set Tewfic in

the right path, and trust to his advancing along it with steady steps. But steps, steady or unsteady, he was not destined to take alone. The opening of the Suez Canal a few years before had given real or supposed interests in Egypt to every power whose ships passed through it. Of course, as more than two-thirds of the vessels were English, our country had necessarily a preponderating influence and power in the counsels of the Viceroy ; but, on the other hand, as it was French enterprise and capital which had built the canal, and as the "Napoleonic tradition," whatever that may be, still held sway over the minds of our rather sentimental neighbours, the English Government had arranged with France, by the consent of the Sultan, what is known as the "Dual Control." This was an arrangement by which the representatives of the two great Powers should have equal access to the ear of the inexperienced Tewfic, and should make joint efforts to control his actions.

As a matter of course such divided counsels were fatal to anything like that strong and vigorous government which is the prime necessity for success in the management of Eastern peoples. Scarcely a year under the new *régime* had passed away before the natives discovered the truth so often lost sight of by more advanced people, that change of government makes but little difference to social and economic conditions. Finding that the "Dual Control" left the stomach as empty and the back as bare as the single rule of Ismail, and hoping much from the weakness, or let us call it the mildness, of the Viceroy, they began to make clamorous appeals for protection and reform. As in all popular movements the man of strong will and fixed purpose is the man who comes to the top, so in Egypt it was Arabi Pasha, a resolute colonel of infantry, who was selected to lay before the Khedive in the name of his subjects their demands for the immediate dismissal of his unpopular and



obnoxious Ministry ; for the convocation of an elective national assembly, and for the increasing the strength of the army to 18,000 men. The presentation of this demand by a man who held the Khedive's commission was in itself an act of rebellion legally punishable with death, and there can be little doubt that Ismail would have nipped the revolt in the bud by drawing a revolver and shooting Arabi where he stood. But Tewfic was made of less stern stuff. He hesitated to give a decisive answer, and, putting Arabi off, reported the matter to his Suzerain at Constantinople. Abdul Hamid acted with his usual promptness and decision. He adopted the only right method of dealing with a population in a state of rebellion, that of first restoring order and then inquiring into and redressing legitimate grievances. He declared his readiness to assist the Khedive with a demonstration of military force, and to despatch Imperial Commissioners to inquire and examine into the alleged wrongs

of his Egyptian subjects, and report to him the result of the inquiry.

One would have imagined that such proposals would have recommended themselves at once to the favourable consideration, and met with the approval, of the powers of the Dual Control. The Sultan was, and is still, the over-lord of the country. Great and commanding interests demanded his continual presence in the capital of his empire. Unable, therefore, to prosecute the necessary inquiries *in propria personâ*, he did what any other ruler in Europe would have done, proposed to despatch trusty envoys to act for him. The English Government, however, acting in that spirit of contemptuous distrust which has over and over again marred its diplomatic relations with Oriental states, objected to these proposals, and opposed their being carried into effect. Without further inquiry into the causes of the discontent, they allowed a new Cabinet to be formed, under which Arabi Pasha was

Under Secretary for War. It pursued the policy so often found successful at home, of getting rid of a persistent grumbler by giving him a place. The Sultan's plan was whittled down to an ineffective mission of Dervish Pasha, from which nothing was expected, and from which nothing came; Tewfic continued his feeble and impossible attempt to please everybody, changing Ministers with the rapidity and facility with which an English politician changes his opinions, and finally appointed Arabi Minister of War. Once fairly on the downgrade public affairs went quickly to perdition. On June 11th, 1882, a disturbance which under any government but that of a "Dual Control" would have been instantly suppressed and heard no more of, broke out in Alexandria, and was allowed to gain head until the Khedive and his ministers lost theirs and basely deserted their posts, leaving Arabi master of the city.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> The original inciter of the outbreak was a Maltese.

Then followed that marvellous performance on the part of the English fleet which I think was described by Mr. Gladstone as being "warlike operations but not war." Perhaps the greatest possible proof of the strong hold which Mr. Gladstone has gained over the party he leads is to be found in the fact that his fame and power were able to survive this majestic and stupendous blunder. However, good has a way of coming out of evil, and if this insane step did nothing else, it at least put an end to that egregious arrangement, the Dual Control.

Strong pressure was brought to bear on the French authorities at Alexandria to induce them to take part in the non-descript operations which ended in carrying fire and death upon a friendly city, but our joint controller would have none of us ; the French Admiral withdrew his ships from the port, and Admiral Seymour was left to win his glory, his peerage, and his pension<sup>17</sup> off his own bat.

<sup>17</sup> This statement is more alliterative than correct.

How the great deed was done, how the glorious victory was achieved, I have no intention of repeating here. The events are too fresh in all our minds to need more than mere mention ; but I feel bound in justice to a misled and unfortunate man to say that, according to all impartial witnesses, Arabi appears in, the days which followed Mr. Gladstone's heroic bombardment, to have remained loyal to the Khedive, and to have acted entirely under his orders. But he did not meet with the loyalty he gave, for Tewfic, with the stubbornness which so often accompanies weakness of character, hearkened to the advice of intriguers and self-interested partisans, and, mistaking precipitancy for promptitude, dismissed him from office and declared him a rebel.

From this very brief *résumé* of the events

It was a lump sum which the Admiral was paid for his services, but the interest on that sum is a tribute which will be for ever paid to his descendents by the producing classes of England ; in what material respect this differs from a perpetual pension, let Mr. Bradlaugh explain to his constituents.

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which ended, in the month of June, 1882, in the partial destruction of a city of the Ottoman empire by the guns of its close ally, it will be seen that throughout the whole of the Egyptian negotiations Abdul Hamid was treated by England first with diplomatic discourtesy, then with open contempt, and finally with outrage and insult. He was thwarted in what would have unquestionably been a successful attempt to prevent disorder, and then prevented from making any effort to suppress it.

As to the legitimacy of the discontent which led to Arabi's revolt, and of which he was the chosen mouth-piece, it is difficult, if not impossible now, to form a solid opinion. By some who ought to know he has been branded as the ambitious leader of a rebellious and factious party which, discontented with the result of appeals for changes, and irritated at the failure of an attempted revolt, corrupted the Khedive's soldiers, and brought about an armed rebellion against his authority. But others

who are equally in a position to judge and bear impartial witness, tell us that he was unrighteously proclaimed a rebel while protesting in a fair and loyal spirit against corrupt administration, and only withdrew his fellow-soldiers into the interior because he did not wish to expose them to an internecine struggle. But however this may be, nothing can be clearer than that Abdul Hamid, the one man who might have been able to settle with a just and high aim the matter in dispute between the Khedive and his subjects, was never permitted an opportunity of forming a correct decision thereupon, and when once the British force had landed in Alexandria, he very wisely left to England the task of extricating herself and her victims from the muddle into which her precipitate action had plunged them; and to civilized Europe that of judging between himself and those who had trampled on his rights and usurped his authority. Arabi proclaimed a rebel, Egypt was, without



the Sultan's authority being even asked, invaded by an English army under the inevitable Lord Wolseley, who gained fresh laurels, and something more substantial in the shape of a lump sum of money, by his victory over a man who was constantly described as an ignorant adventurer, without the slightest military skill, and with absolutely no strategic experience. Into the story of the struggle and its end there is no need to go here. The "rebel" army was crushed, its leader captured, and, instead of being tried by court-martial and shot as a traitor, as he should have been if the Khedive's proclamation concerning him was not a lie from beginning to end, was, after a rather discreditable trial, banished as an exile to one of *England's* Asiatic dependencies.

The English Government did not fail to make capital out of the refusal of France to take any part in the "warlike operations" which were not war, and her right to act any further in concert with England was

denied. She had left the English to snatch the chestnuts out of the fire, was the contention, and henceforth her right to have a voice in Egyptian affairs had absolutely ceased. The dual control was at an end; and with as little reference as possible to the Sultan, and at the request of the Khedive, the English Government proceeded, with the assistance of Sir E. Baring, Lord Northbrook, Lord Dufferin and several other distinguished persons, to do all sorts of beneficent and philanthropic things for the oppressed fellaheen of Egypt.

Very strange and wonderful things they were some of them. In the beginning of 1883 provisional councils were established whose duties were to assess and collect rates, within their jurisdiction, for the execution of local works, and to tender advice to the Egyptian Government on purely local matters; and a Legislative Council, to meet four times a year, was created for the purpose of considering and reporting on petitions presented to the Khedive, and

offering him its invaluable opinions on the subject of the annual budget and other matters of general interest.

It soon became evident that the defeat of Arabi and the subsequent statesmanlike efforts just mentioned had not had the effect of bringing either Egypt or England out of their difficulties, and that the withdrawal of the latter's army must be indefinitely postponed. The unsettled state of feeling caused by England's action in Alexandria rapidly spread throughout the whole of the Sultan's dominions in Africa with that mysterious celerity which so often characterizes the carrying of news in the East. The wild Arab tribes of the Soudan, learning that the Sultan's troops had crossed bayonets disastrously to themselves with the soldiers of the foreigner, naturally thinking that their master's power was on the wane, broke into open revolt, and besieged the outlying Egyptian garrisons. Of course, having upset the only native authority, England had practically

made herself responsible for the lives of the unfortunate men who suddenly found themselves surrounded by myriads of implacable foes. Although a certain small but noisy political faction at home desired to shirk the responsibility and apply the policy of "the bloody sponge" to the besieged garrisons, such an act of infamy was at present impossible to a man like Mr. Gladstone, about whom still clung a few of the best traditions of England's past. General Hicks was despatched with a small relieving force, which was surprised and cut to pieces, and almost immediately afterwards a similar fate befell the soldiers of General Baker.

Then came the world-famous ride of Gordon across the desert to Khartoum. There is little need for me to say anything here respecting the closing days of that splendid hero's life. Every incident connected with them is likely to remain fresh and vivid in the memory of every one of this generation. The story

of the siege of Khartoum, and the death of its illustrious defender, will ever remain a crown of glory to a man and a brand of shame to a nation.

The advent to power of Lord Salisbury, with which, let us hope, his predecessor's baseness to Gordon had a good deal to do, inspired the friends of Egypt with some hopes of an end being put to the deplorable state of things which followed on the fall of Khartoum, and in August, 1885, what looked like a step in the right direction was taken by the despatch of Sir Drummond Wolff on a special mission to the Sultan with reference to the affairs of Egypt. His instructions, not long ago published, seemed to hint at something like an apology to Abdul Hamid for the quite unusual and discourteous manner in which the previous Government had ignored his authority. Here is an excerpt:—

“It is the wish of her Majesty's Government to recognize in its full significance the position which is secured to his

Majesty the Sultan as Sovereign of Egypt by treaties and other instruments having a force under international law. They are of opinion that the authority of the Sultan over the large portion of the Mohammedans which exists under his rule will be much assured by a due recognition of his legitimate position in respect to Egypt; and on the other hand they believe that it is in his Majesty's power to contribute materially to the establishment of settled order and good government in portions of that country which have recently been subject to the calamity of armed rebellion. The co-operation of the Sultan will doubtless exercise a marked influence on the minds of large bodies of the inhabitants who profess the faith of Islam, and will neutralize any evil effects arising from any suspicion they may have entertained that it was intended to subject them to the dominations of nations differing from themselves in faith. The Sultan also possesses, in the various races under his rule, the

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means of supplying soldiers to whom the climate of the southern territories of Egypt is not injurious, and he is therefore in a position to bring to bear upon the task of restoring and maintaining order in those regions, brave troops who will suffer from no material disadvantage to which the insurgent inhabitants of the country itself are not exposed."

It will be seen that in these words Lord Salisbury passed a severer censure upon Mr. Gladstone than any which he delivered from his place in the House of Lords. The sovereignty of the Sultan over Egypt, his authority as head of the Mohammedan faith, the power consequently possessed by him over the wild peoples of Upper Egypt, and the bravery of his own troops, were all recognized and insisted upon as unanswerable reasons why the task of tranquillizing Egypt should no longer be left to English soldiers, but placed in the hands of the troops of its legitimate sovereign. The course of action indicated in the "note" was essentially a



reversal of the whole policy of the Liberal Government. In the Alexandrian *fiasco* of 1882, and in the line of action which followed it, the position and rights of the Sultan have been studiously and ostentatiously ignored.

During Lord Granville's last year at the Foreign Office this policy was italicized. In February, 1884, the Turkish Ambassador in London handed to Lord Granville a despatch in which was asserted, in the plainest language, the demand of the Sultan as the Sovereign of Egypt to be the sole restorer of order in that province, and requesting formally that early measures might be taken for the withdrawal of the British army, so that its duties might be undertaken by his Majesty's own troops. This was followed up by further despatches on the 18th of March and 12th of April, in which the English Government was pressed to come to an early understanding with the Porte in regard to the future government of Egypt, and to its future defence by the Otto-

man forces. All these representations were met by the English Foreign Office with a supercilious silence the egregious unwisdom of which was in 1887 demonstrated by General Gordon, who had the advantage over Lord Granville of a knowledge of some of the facts of the case, and who bluntly told his Government that with 3000 Turkish troops he would undertake to "settle the whole business." It is hardly necessary here to recall the fact that this suggestion, like every other made by the devoted man whom they had doomed to death, was contemptuously rejected by Mr. Gladstone's Ministry.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Gordon was not the only one of their servants whose advice the English Government flouted and whose warnings they neglected. On the 8th of December, 1885, Sir E. Baring wrote to Lord Granville as follows:—"There can, I think, be little doubt of the ultimate end of active British interference in the Soudan. Not only would it make the policy of entirely withdrawing the British garrisons from Egypt a matter of extreme difficulty, I might almost say, as far as the present generation is concerned, of impossibility, but it would involve the great risk that, by force of circumstances, we should be led to establish British authority on a permanent or quasi-permanent

In June, 1885, a climax was brought about by the presentation of a despatch from the Sultan, expressing his discontent with the position of affairs, and declaring, with more than his previous emphasis, his desire to uphold his own authority and restore and maintain order in his dominions, by means of a Turkish army of occupation. It was to this despatch that Lord Salisbury replied in the following August by the mission of Sir Drummond Wolff with the instructions given above.

At his first interview with the Sultan the envoy extraordinary declared that the principal object of his mission was to secure the reorganization of the administration of Egypt with a *full recognition of the rights of the Sultan*. The firstfruit of this mission was a Convention concluded between England and Turkey on October 24th,

foundation over the greater portion of the long valley of the Nile." To this Lord Granville replied that the Government entirely disagreed with Sir E. Baring.

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1885, for the despatch of High Commissioners to Egypt representing each of the two Powers, whose duty was to make the fullest investigation into the causes of the existing state of affairs, and, in consultation with the Khedive, to report on the means to be adopted to bring about "a permanent state of prosperity," based on the security of the frontier and the future stability of the Egyptian Government. When the provisions of this Convention had been carried out, a further Convention was to be concluded for the definitive withdrawal of the British troops.

Sir Drummond Wolff himself acted as the High Commissioner for England, and in his final report on the result of his labours he naïvely admitted what had been the main object of his Government's solicitude throughout the whole business.

"For England herself," he says, "the primary consideration is the necessity of a free transit to India. This could only be secured and made permanent by satisfac-

tory political conditions, by freedom from invasion and disturbance, and by the contentment and good government of the population."

The thanks of all friends of Turkey are due to the writer of this document for his frankness in placing the welfare of the fellaheen as the last object of his country's policy, and also for having plainly told the theorists and political pedants at home that "it was impossible to apply to Egypt, except very partially, institutions taken from any other country." Which statesman-like remark we recommend to the attention of Sir Henry Eliot.

We cannot speak so highly of the envoy's references to the claims of France. He makes very much too much of the part she played in the construction of the Suez Canal; for although the main promoter (not the engineer, as many people suppose) was a Frenchman, and French capital largely assisted in starting the work, still the thing was a business

speculation, the interest of France therein is by no means the greatest, and to all intents and purposes ends with the prompt payment of dues and dividends.<sup>19</sup> Of course it is natural enough that a people rather given to self-glorification should feel proud of the fact that so great an enterprise owed its initiation to one of its own citizens, but this fact of itself would have no value in international law in the determination of the claims of France to interfere in the affairs of Egypt. The High Commissioner is much more correct when he bases the claims of France to remain associated with England on the share she had so long taken in the joint administration of affairs which was only formally brought to a close at the bombardment of Alexandria, when the French admiral failed to see that dual control in peace

<sup>19</sup> At the present time an immense number of shares are held in England, and with these and the Government holding it is probable that merely from the shareholders' point of view England's interests are larger than those of France.

meant combined action in war. But, as a matter of fact, in trying to make out that the claims of France to official existence in Egypt were as good as those of England, Sir Drummond Wolff did not accomplish much, for he failed to show that England had any right there at all, other than those of possessing "three-fourths of the traffic of the canal which serves British India and the Colonies."

And it is only because England places no faith in the power of the Egyptian Government, supported by the Sultan, to guarantee the safety of the canal from armed attack, or, in other words, to secure its complete neutralization, that she still insists on pursuing a policy which alienates an old ally, costs her own citizens millions of money, and, by creating the jealousy and suspicion of other European powers, may one day cost her oceans of blood to boot. Directly Turkey can conclusively prove that she is intelligent and strong enough to secure this end every trace of anything like



a right on the part of England's troops and England's officials to remain an hour longer on Egyptian soil would absolutely and *de facto* cease. The Khedive, of course, might possibly still desire, in the interests of his finances and for the better administration of justice, to retain a certain number of European officials, but they would remain subject to his approval and on the same terms as though they were born Egyptians.

It remains now to correct a few of the popular ideas afloat as to the causes of the final failure of Sir Drummond Wolff's mission and of the refusal of the Sultan to ratify the Anglo-Turkish Convention of May, 1887. In the opinion of most English journalists and second-rate politicians this refusal was due entirely to the intrigues of the great Powers who were jealous of England's influence and not at all to the exercise of the free-will of Abdul Hamid, who, it was thought, could not have failed to have been overcome with delight at the gracious terms offered him by the

High Commissioner. It is said that Russia and France, by a combination of menace and cajolery, by stirring up the religious fanaticism of the Softas, by appealing to the ebullient patriotism of the Ulemas, and by dropping dark hints and reminders of the fate which overtook Abdul Aziz, succeeded, after much difficulty and delay, in inducing the Sultan, an amiable but weak and vacillating man, to refuse his signature to a document which would have formally recognized the right of a foreign power to armed interference in one of his own provinces at its own sweet will and pleasure.

A very few rays of the daylight of reason shed upon these notions will make the truth and falsehood of them sufficiently obvious.

That France and Russia should and did oppose the signing of the Convention is natural enough, and may be taken for granted. The not unnatural jealousy of the former Power of what she considered the unfairly gained increase of England's influence on the Nile, and her consequent

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anxiety to put a spoke in the wheel of English diplomacy, and the traditional rivalry of Russia with England on Oriental grounds, are sufficient to account for the joint opposition of MM. de Montebello and Nelidoff. But that this opposition was successful owing to the weak personal character of the man on whom it was pressed can surely be believed by no one whose memory is long enough to carry him back over the events of the last ten years. To describe as "an amiable but somewhat too plastic monarch," the man who, in 1877, when threatened with invasion by an overwhelming force and deserted by every one on whose support he had a right to rely, refused to submit one iota of his sovereign right to any arbitrament but the final one of war, and who declined to leave his capital and desert his post when the enemy was at his gates, and his ministers, pale and panic-stricken, were urging immediate flight—is little short of delirious nonsense. Those who talk and write such wretched stuff as

this should remember the logical "law of parsimony" which says that the simplest explanation which is sufficient to explain a given fact is the one which should be accepted; and a very short review of the convention and the events which preceded it will convince any non-bigoted and open-eyed politician that there were reasons enough to justify the Sultan's refusal, even had the ambassadors of France and Russia kept their advice to themselves.

Let any honest and fair-minded reader put himself for a moment in the Sultan's place, and look at the situation from his point of view. It will be remembered that in 1885 he had been pressing upon the English Government his desire to take the conduct of Egyptian affairs into his own hands, and to replace the British army of occupation with his own troops. These representations had been treated with contempt by the Cabinet of Mr. Gladstone; but when Lord Salisbury was called to office he opened negotiations whose object was,

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apparently, to meet as far as possible the Sultan's long-expressed wishes. So that the change might not be made precipitately, however, a preliminary convention was arranged providing for an inquiry, which, necessarily lasting some months, would give to both Powers the required interval for preparation for the change. As a matter of fact, this interval was of ten years' duration, and after so long a time the Sultan surely had some right to expect that when finally the convention was presented it would have contained definite provisions for the restoration of his legitimate rule and the withdrawal of the British bayonets. But what did he find? After arranging for yet another convention "for better securing the freedom of navigation through the Suez Canal,"—a freedom, be it observed, which had never been in the slightest doubt or danger, he read as follows:—  
"Inasmuch as the abnormal state of the Soudan and the troubles caused by the political events in Egypt *may for some time*

render necessary the adoption of ordinary precautions for the safety of the frontier and the internal security of Egypt, her Britannic Majesty's Government will superintend the military defence and organization of the country. For this purpose it will maintain in Egypt the *number of British troops* it may consider necessary, and will continue to exercise a general inspection of the Egyptian army. The conditions concerning the withdrawal of the British troops, and the cessation of all supervision exercised by the Government of her Britannic Majesty over the Egyptian army shall be fulfilled in conformity with the stipulations of Article 5 of the present convention."

Now the passages italicized in the foregoing are, to say the least of it, circumspectly ambiguous, and practically bind the English Government to nothing in particular, and what was called the "abnormal state" of the Soudan was certainly not worse than it had been ten years before, when Lord

Salisbury had stated it as his conviction that the Sultan's authority and the Sultan's troops would supply the most effective means of establishing "settled order and good government." Why, then, was it considered essential in 1887 that British troops should still guard the frontier of Egypt and British officers superintend its army?

Article 5, whose stipulations were referred to above, was not more reassuring than Article 4. It fixed a *minimum* period of three years for the retention of the troops, and went on to say that "if the appearance of danger in the interior or from without should render necessary the adjournment of the evacuation," they should remain until the danger should disappear; and even after such evacuation the army was to stay another two years under English supervision. This was pretty bad, but in the latter part of the article was a provision which rendered the acceptance of the convention by the Sultan absolutely impossible. " ' If there were reasons to fear



an invasion from without,' it said, or if order and security in the interior were disturbed, or if the Khedivate in Egypt refused to exercise its duties towards the Sovereign court, or its international obligations—"the Ottoman Government might make use of its right of occupying Egypt in arms, but England *was to have equal rights* in the same contingencies.

Surely these two articles are of themselves sufficient to account for the refusal of the Sultan to ratify the convention, without having recourse to such explanations as the threats of France or the advice of Russia. The tone adopted by the Queen's Government since the return of its envoy does not promise well for the chances of an early settlement of the Egyptian question on the only basis on which such a settlement is possible. On the contrary, speaking from his place in the House of Commons, the Under Secretary of State said, "Our position remains what it was, except that we have had the full

worth of all the time and money expended in the demonstration of our friendship to Turkey and our good faith," and he coolly asserted that Turkey has recognized that England has special rights in Egypt, and is there with the Sultan's entire acquiescence. Considering that Abdul Hamid has repeatedly declared that he considers his sovereign rights in Egypt have never for a moment lapsed; that he has yielded only to *force majeure*, and that he regards the continued presence of the English troops as a distinct breach of international law, this assertion must be looked upon as more diplomatic than true.

Really, of course, all this pother about the "security" of the Canal is altogether unnecessary and absurd. The ditch dug by M. de Lesseps is by no means essential to England's communications with her Eastern Empire. In peace no question of its free navigation can possibly arise, and in war we should not dare to trust to it as a means of reaching India. No number of

troops on land or of fleets on the ocean could prevent treachery sinking a barge in one of its narrower parts, and as effectually blocking the road as though its banks were in possession of a hostile power ; and even now, what with the heavy charges and the continual and prolonged delays which occur in course of transit, it is questionable whether the Canal is such an immense benefit to the world's commerce as is generally supposed.

Of one thing the great Powers may make quite sure, that Abdul Hamid's signature will never be affixed to any document which in any way infringes on his sovereign rights in Egypt, and any arrangement which neglects to take account of this determination is doomed to hopeless and disastrous failure. Let us trust that the English people will be wiser than their leaders, and that as soon as the difficulties with their own Egypt-Ireland are satisfactorily disposed of, they will insist that their troops shall no longer be permitted

or compelled to perform duties which could be much more satisfactorily undertaken by somebody else, and will demand through their representatives that the Sultan shall be allowed to carry out those simple measures which are all that are required to maintain order and secure well-being, and that thus in this, the eventide of Egypt's long history, there may be light.

## CHAPTER V.

## BULGARIA AND THE SITUATION.

IT would be hopeless to attempt to give any presentment of the present political situation in South-Eastern Europe without sketching, however briefly, the history of Bulgaria in the last decade; and therefore, at the risk of some possible repetition, I must cast back in time to the signing of the San Stefano treaty. That famous document, which was so much mutilated in the Council Chamber at Berlin, has at least one great and inestimable value for the politician. It sets out clearly and definitely what is the Russian ideal<sup>20</sup> of the final reconstruction

<sup>20</sup> Although I say "Russian ideal," I am conscious that I should be more correct in saying "the Russian Czar's ideal." Under a rigid censorship of the press,

of the so-called Christian provinces of the Ottoman Empire; the difference between the Treaties of San Stefano and of Berlin being the difference between what Russia wanted and what she felt herself compelled (*pro tem.*) to accept.

Article 6 of the treaty of San Stefano runs as follows :—

“ Bulgaria is constituted an autonomous tributary province, with a Christian government and a national militia. The definitive frontiers of the Bulgarian principality will be traced by a special Russo-Turkish Commission before the evacuation of Roumelia by the Imperial Russian army.”

The article further gave a rough sketch of the boundaries of the new principality, and these boundaries included the whole country from the Danube on the north, to the Ægean on the south; the western boundary being the frontier line of Servia

and in the absence of any freedom of speech, it is quite impossible to ascertain the real feeling of the Russian people.

and Albania, and the eastern the Black Sea. As other articles of the treaty gave independence to Servia and Montenegro, and local administrative autonomy to Bosnia and Herzegovina, its effect upon the rule of the Sultan would have been to confine it to the small triangle formed by Adrianople, Gallipoli, Constantinople.

I have said somewhere above, that Russia prefers the policy of sap and mine to that of direct assault, and this policy she had been steadily and sedulously pursuing for years previous to the declaration of war. For years she had been employing a perfect army of political agents in educating the people of Bulgaria into the belief that they were a "nation," and consequently that they had a right to a separate existence apart from either Greek or Turk, but not quite so far apart from the leader of the Slavonic races. So when the Czar's ministers drew up the Treaty of San Stefano they had some right to except that the population of Bulgaria were sufficiently



permeated with Russian ideas to make the construction of the new province stipulated for in that treaty a task of no very great difficulty. Article 7 therefore provides that there should be a Prince of Bulgaria "freely elected by the population and confirmed by the Sublime Porte with the consent of the Powers, and no member of the reigning dynasties of the great European Powers shall be capable of being elected a Prince of Bulgaria."

In the cutting up of the treaty which took place at Berlin the clause which provided for the extension of the new province across the Balkans was excised, but possibly owing to the midnight visit of the "honest broker" to the bedside of Lord Beaconsfield, the provisions for the election of a Prince were permitted to remain in their entirety. In this provision the Czar once more displayed the hereditary and bitter hatred of his name and race for everything in the shape of popular freedom. The most devout lover of the monarchical

form of government usually founds his defence of it on the value of its historic continuity, and one would have to be *plus royaliste que le roi* to advocate its adoption by an intelligent people making a perfectly new start in a national career. Neither then nor at any previous period of her history had Bulgaria possessed the inestimable advantage of a royal line of her own, and therefore there was no reason whatever (except the Czar's hatred of popular government) why she should not have commenced her new life as a republic. But republics have shown themselves to be not very handy tools for the wielding of tyrants, and so Bulgaria was to have a prince upon whose selection Russia could put an absolute veto, and whose first infant steps should be taken under her tender guidance.<sup>21</sup>

By Article 7 it was provided that the introduction of the new system into Bulgaria and the superintendence of its working should be entrusted for two years to an Imperial Russian Commission. And Article 8 said that the Ottoman army should entirely

The reasons given for all this solicitude are worth quoting. Thus spoke Prince Gortschakoff,—

“The reason why many of the articles are drawn up in vague terms is to leave room for future understandings upon the modification deemed necessary. The term of two years was fixed for the provisional occupation of Bulgaria because that lapse of time was judged necessary so as to maintain order and peace, and protect the Christian and Mussulman populations against reciprocal reprisals, reorganize the country, introduce national institutions and a native militia, and also because if the occupation had been indefinite, it might have been looked upon as a preliminary to

withdraw from every part of the new principality. and that until the complete formation of a native militia sufficient to preserve order, security and tranquillity, the strength of which would be fixed later on, by an understanding between the two parties to the Treaty, Russian troops should occupy the country and give armed assistance to the Commissioner in case of need. This occupation was to be limited to a term “approximating to two years.”

taking possession of the province, which in no way entered into the views of the Imperial Cabinet. It need not be said that the terms being approximative, the Imperial Cabinet is quite ready to abridge it as much as possible without injuring the success of the difficult work that had to be accomplished in the interest of the general peace ;"—“the Russians have no intention, as is affirmed, of making Bulgaria enter the Russian political system. Scarcely anything has been changed in the institutions to which the country is accustomed. Attention has merely been given to the execution of the law, which was defective. The nomination of Russian governors was merely to protect the national development, and render possible the meeting of the first Bulgarian assembly summoned to settle the institution of the principality.”

Judging by the text of the Treaty of Berlin, the childlike candour and naïveté of the old diplomat failed to have that effect

upon the assembled plenipotentiaries which was intended, for we find that not only was the southern frontier of the new territory drawn at the Balkans, but the provisional régime of Russian supervision<sup>22</sup> was limited to nine months instead of the "approximate ten years;" also the proposed occupation of the province by Russian troops was cruelly cut short. "The period of occupation by the Imperial Russian troops is fixed at nine months," and the Russian Government was required in so many words "to undertake that within a further period of three months the passage of its troops across Roumania shall cease, and that principality shall be completely evacuated."

<sup>22</sup> The agents who made straight the paths of Russia in Bulgaria, were always drawn from a certain class of Bulgarians who had received their education in Russia, and had become Russian in religion and social feeling. They were supplied with large amounts of Russian literature, song-books, school-books, histories and what not, whose object was to teach that the liberation of South-Eastern Europe was to be followed by a great Pan-Sclavonic Union under the leadership of the Czar.

Strange as it may seem to those English Radicals who have such a touching faith in autocratic honesty when the autocrat doesn't happen to be an English peer or an oriental prince, it would almost appear as though the members of the Congress had some doubts as to whether the Bulgarians' "freedom of election" would be altogether as "free" as it might be, if the canvass was conducted by Cossack officers and the ballot-boxes guarded by Russian bayonets, and this idea is strengthened when we learn that within a few days of the assembling of the Congress its members heard that the Russian military governor of Bulgaria was taking proceedings with a view to influencing the political and financial future of the province.

Subsequent history has shown, however, that to a Russian at any rate, there are more ways of killing a cat than choking it with butter, and that during the period preceding the election of Prince Alexander of Battenberg the Russian Commissioners

let no opportunity pass of convincing the Bulgarians that "Codlin was the friend, not Short!" and that their real hope for future prosperity lay in the sympathy and protection of that great monarch whose tribute to popular aspirations is the long line of exiles which endlessly tramps towards the mines of Siberia, and whose temple of freedom is the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul.

At length Prince Alexander was elected in full conformity with the third article of the Berlin Treaty, and thus ostensibly under the protection of all the territories, but really under the auspices of the Russian Government, Bulgaria began the new era of National life. The reception given to "the Battenberg" was headed by the Russian Prince Dondoukoff Korsakoff; the Czar signified in many ways his entire and gracious approbation of the popular choice, and Russian diplomacy had no reason to doubt that although the position taken up in the treaty of San Stefano had



to be abandoned for the moment, the moulding of the policy of the principality would remain in Muscovite hands, and its ultimate successful rebellion against the Ottoman power would meet with no internal opposition or impediment.

At the first interview which he granted to the new prince, Abdul Hamid showed that he was fully alive to the difficulties and dangers of the position ; difficulties and dangers which he said could only be avoided, if at all, by the loyal adherence of all parties to the letter and spirit of the Treaty of Berlin. He impressed upon the prince the paramount necessity of enforcing religious equality ; and drawing his attention to the general prosperity of the Christian Bulgarians after centuries of Turkish rule, he pointed out to him the fact that the Mussulman population had cruelly suffered during the late war, and showed him that it was alike justice and good policy to give them all the protection in his power.

The events of the next twelve months showed pretty clearly that the Bulgarian prince had not profited much by his suzerain's counsel, for it was constantly reported to the Sultan that the Mohammedans were repeatedly subjected to persecution, and it became evident to him that, unless some material improvement soon took place, he would have to take some measures to enforce his sovereign rights. Meanwhile he found it necessary to point out to the great powers that nothing had been done towards carrying out such stipulations of the Treaty of Berlin as were favourable to the Porte. Scarcely a brick had been removed in the promised destruction of the Bulgarian fortresses, and in reply to the remonstrance of Austria and England, Prince Alexānder had answered that the work would cost money, and that he had none to spare, and that the fortresses were required as barracks and storehouses; in fact, a reply quite *à la Russe*.

The Sultan found himself also compelled

to take constant diplomatic notice of the persistent intrigues of Russia in Eastern Roumelia, intrigues carried on in furtherance of the policy of San Stefano as opposed to that of Berlin, and he warned the Powers that their suspicions in the face of the strenuous activity of Russia would inevitably end in the reopening of the whole Eastern question, a prophecy which, as I write, every day and every telegram seems to bring nearer to its fulfilment. The process of Russianizing the new province became more palpable in 1881, when Alexander placed himself under the guardianship of a Russian general, whose name has again cropped up in affairs Bulgarian. One of the first proposals of General Ernroth was the appointment of a "Council of State composed of foreigners speaking a Slav language." This was to be followed by the appointment of Russian officers as military commissioners throughout the principality, and there can be little doubt that at this historic moment the prince had

almost made up his mind to come forward "as representing the indissoluble tie which unites the Russian nation with the people of Bulgaria."<sup>23</sup>

So obvious and striking was this attitude that the Sultan addressed a powerful memorandum to the Powers, in which he gave details of case after case in which the Bulgarian Government had tried systematically to slip out of its obligations imposed by the Berlin Treaty. The memorandum pointed out that neither the property nor the religion of the Mussulman was respected in Bulgaria, nor were Mohammedans allowed their share in the conduct of public affairs to which they were entitled, nor was the establishment of Turkish commercial agents either admitted or recognized. The Sultan also drew attention to the wretched condition of the Mohammedan emigrants, many of whom were waiting for repatriation, and many of those who had returned were kept out of

<sup>23</sup> Russian official organ.

their property and in a state of beggary. The memorandum concluded with an appeal to that sense of justice of which the Porte had heard so much and experienced so little in its dealings with the Western Powers.

These representations were not altogether without effect, the Powers exerted themselves sufficiently to make certain diplomatic suggestions to Prince Alexander as to the more rigorous compliance with the stipulations of the Berlin Treaty. He was told that the Porte had shown conclusive evidence that his Government had not acted impartially as between his subjects of different religions, and he was called upon to take measures for carrying out the enactments of the Treaty to which he owed his throne.

Whether Alexander was getting a little sick of Russia's patronage, and found that her protection was only to be gained at the price of his entire liberty of action, or whether he thought that the Powers meant

not to confine themselves to words, and that Russia's star was for the moment at any rate on the wane, it were bootless here to inquire, as the old writers have it; but it is certain that just at this time he began to take up a more independent line of action, in which he was supported by a certain number of influential members of the Assembly. The immediate effect of this change of front was a considerable political agitation; the Bulgarian Liberals put much pressure on him, and throughout the whole country a decidedly anti-Russian feeling began to manifest itself. Political crisis followed political crisis, and the prince displayed a certain amount of weakness and lack of impartiality. In October, 1887, the Sultan again addressed himself to the great Powers, and once more called upon them to enforce the more strict application of the Berlin Treaty.

He drew attention to some recent speeches of Prince Alexander, in which use had been made of expressions inconsistent

with a loyal recognition of the supremacy of the Ottoman Porte, and he protested against a continuance on the part of the signatories of the treaty of a policy of non-intervention which was gradually leading to complications and disorders which must result in an *impasse* ending in war. The Powers, however, evidently thinking that they knew more of the state of affairs than any mere Turk, still held their hands, and the consequence was that in 1885 public feeling in Bulgaria became excited to so high a pitch that the prince allowed himself to drift with the stream of popular feeling, and took a step which finally led to his losing his throne. Eastern Roumelia revolted, and invited him to accept its union with Bulgaria under one administration. He accepted the offer, and stating himself to be incapable of resisting the wishes of the whole population, assumed the government of the united territories on both sides of the Balkans. At this crisis Abdul Hamid adopted a line



of policy which proved up to the hilt his profound judgment and capacity to deal with political difficulties. In opposing the Constitution of "Free Bulgaria" at the Berlin Congress he had acted with the full knowledge that such a cause could have but one consequence, the complete carrying out of the whole Russian programme. His opposition was successful, and he was left in possession of the control of the territory south of the Balkans. The position now, however, was completely changed; the vaulting ambition of Russia had overreached itself. Both north and south of the Balkans the people were sick and impatient of Russian intrigue and interference. Prince Alexander had sent his Russian advisers about their business and was to all appearances determined to abandon for ever his former attitude of subservience to the Czar. That devoted friend of freedom and national aspirations, seeing that his tool had broken in his hand, or rather had been snatched from them and turned

against himself, promptly lost his temper. The prince's name was removed from the Russian army list, and he was told in language more plain than courteous that the protection and patronage of Russia was lost to him for ever. The prince's reply was an address to the Sultan, in which he frankly acknowledged him as suzerain of the united territories. Abdul Hamid, seeing that the present attitude of the Bulgarians was the one of all others most likely to convince the great Powers of the correctness of the views he had so frequently expressed, abstained from any step towards reconquering the revolted province, and simply contented himself with taking precautions against further disturbances. He had not long to wait for the further development of the situation. A skilful hand dangled before the eyes of King Milan of Servia a very tempting bait. It was pointed out to him that here and now was a chance of compensation for the disappointment of the Berlin Congress when

he had seen Bosnia and Herzegovina handed over to Austria instead of being united to Servia under his rule. Now, he was told, was the time to advance, against a prince with whose rule the people were evidently discontented, and if by any chance he and his brave Servians should get too hard knocks a more powerful neighbour would be found if wanted. The bait took, and he declared war against Bulgaria. But, like many another cat's-paw he had reckoned without his host. The Battenberg soon showed that if rather feckless in peace he at least was valiant in war. Amidst tremendous enthusiasm he put himself at the head of his little army, and rushed to meet the invaders. He made very short work of them; for although the successes which they had gained by their sudden and unexpected action had rendered the defence, strategically speaking, all but impossible, they were hopelessly routed, driven back over the frontier to the accompaniment of the

contemptuous laughter of Europe, and so completely demoralized that Belgrade was left at the mercy of Prince Alexander. But he never went there, for at this crisis in the life of the "Lion of Servia" Abdul Hamid proposed an armistice whose acceptance put an end to the war.

· Foiled in her attempt on the liberty of the whole Bulgarian people, Russia made a direct attack on the person of the prince, and kidnapping succeeded where war had failed. In April, 1886, in the middle of the night, Alexander was surprised by an armed band, a revolver was put to his breast, he was compelled to sign a written abdication, and was carried as a prisoner across the frontier. As a matter of course, Russia at once disavowed all knowledge of or connection with this act of brigandage, but equally as a matter of course no one outside the editorial office of the *Pall Mall Gazette* believed her, and the feeling of indignation against her was so strong throughout Europe that had Alexander,

directly he found himself free, hastened back to his people there can be very little doubt that he would have received the support of most of the great Powers, and would have sat upon the throne more firmly than ever. But he failed to show any of the prompt decision and firmness of will which distinguished him at the outbreak of war with Servia. He hesitated, halted, let the precious days go by, and at last, when he did really return, he signalized his second advent by a letter to the Czar couched in language so cringing and servile that Europe at once ceased to take any further interest in him, and in a very short time he disappeared from the boards of the great Eastern Drama.

From that day to this "the autonomous province" which occupied so much of the attention of the Berlin plenipotentiaries, and for whose future welfare ten years ago the great Powers affected so much solicitude, has presented a spectacle over which men and angels might weep, and has afforded proofs

absolutely conclusive of the statesmanlike wisdom of the advice so constantly and so fruitlessly offered by the one man who has real knowledge of the necessities of the case, the Sultan Abdul Hamid II. For months and months after the final and humiliating departure of Prince Alexander, the Regent of Bulgaria went up and down advertising for somebody to come over and rule them, and in July of last year a Prince Ferdinand of Coburg (another of the inevitable and never-failing Teutonic royalties) accepted the situation "subject to the consent of the Powers." But that consent has up to now not been given, and it does not need much political foresight to perceive that very soon, possibly before these lines are in print, the Coburger will have followed the Battenberg into the obscurity of some squalid German court. For one moment this ill-advised person seems to have been rightly inspired. This is what he said: "Were I permitted to follow the impulses of my heart, I would hasten at once into the midst of the

Bulgarian nation ; but an elected Bulgarian Prince must show respect for treaties, and this respect must be the strength of his rule and ensure the prosperity of the Bulgarian people." I suppose he wasn't permitted to follow "the impulses of his heart," for he didn't show respect for treaties ; his rule is far from strong ; he has by no means ensured the prosperity of the Bulgarian people, and the only question which can possibly be asked about him is, how long will he be allowed to stay ?

The position of the Sultan is plain and morally unassailable. The panacea for misgovernment in South-Eastern Europe was devised at the Berlin Congress, and, as one of the signatories of the instrument then drawn up, Abdul Hamid is ready to keep strictly within the four corners of the article. He alone of the Powers whose representatives put their names to that treaty has faithfully abided by every engagement, and he may now fairly call attention to the words of Prince Bismarck, spoken in July, 1878.



When article 3 of the treaty was under discussion, some of the members of the Congress had some doubts as to its sufficiency, and a wish was expressed that some provision might be made against the contingency of a prolonged interregnum. On this occasion the Prince President remarked that,—

“The Congress is not in a position to find a remedy for all these dangers. If the Bulgarian population, either through ill-will or innate incapacity, cannot make their new institutions work, Europe will in truth be obliged to take counsel, but later on and when that time shall have arrived.”

That time has arrived. Owing, not to the ill-will and innate incapacity of the Bulgarians, but to the bad faith of Russia and the *fainéant* policy of the great Powers, the “new institution” will not work. Is Europe going to take counsel? Should she do so, there can only be two possible outcomes of her deliberation. The one is the restoration to the Sultan of direct and supreme authority

over the province. In favour of such a decision can be urged the material progress made by the people who have remained under Abdul Hamid's rule, as against the wretchedness, discontent, and disorder which have prevailed under the much-belauded autonomy. Such a decision would at least make for European peace, inasmuch as it would place the government of Bulgaria in the hands of the least ambitious and least aggressive power in Europe. If firmness in disaster, loyalty to engagements, and patience under outrageous provocation, are any recommendation to the favourable consideration of the Western powers, then undoubtedly that consideration would be meted out to Abdul Hamid with no grudging hand. But, alas! it has been too often proved that such qualities act but as invitations to neglect, contempt, and further aggression, and although the benefits which would follow to Bulgaria and to the world from such a decision on the part of the Powers

as that I have just mentioned, I confess I have little hopes of seeing it arrived at. The other alternative is the one most likely to be adopted, and the one to which all the signs and portents seem just now to point. For as I lay down the pen with which I have so feebly and ineffectively attempted to do justice to a good man and a wise ruler, I seem to see the horizon darkening, and the storm-clouds gathering over South-Eastern Europe, and to hear the first faint mutterings of a tempest whose lightnings will be the flashes of artillery and the lurid glare of burning villages, whose torrents will be the red blood of men and the salt tears of women, and whose course will be marked in history by overturned thrones, by wrecked empires and by ruined peoples.

THE END.

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